

W.H.G. Kingston

## "With Axe and Rifle"

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### Chapter One.

**Captain Loraine's farm in the Far West—Hot-headed young men—Our family—Uncle Denis taken sick—We set out to visit him—The corduroy road—A wayside hotel—Rough company—Appearance of the country—Crossing the ford at Green River—Nearly lost—A brave Negro—Gratitude of my parents—At Mr Silas Bracher's plantation—Diogenes—Mammy Coe—The slave-owner—My father endeavours to purchase the Negro—Slavery—Unexpected recovery of Dr O'Dowd's patient—A sportsman's ambition—Trapping—A rich prize—Something about turkeys—The wonderful Cave of Kentucky—Our return to Illinois.**

Some time after the termination of the long war which England had waged in the cause of liberty when well-nigh all the world was up in arms against her, my father, Captain Patrick Loraine, having served for many years as a subaltern, believing that he should no longer find employment for his sword, sold out of the army, and with the proceeds of his commission in his pocket, quitting the old country, came to the United States in the hopes of making his fortune more rapidly than he could expect to do at home.

Finding that as a British officer he was looked upon with distrust in the Eastern States, he made his way westward until he finally located himself in Illinois on a fertile spot, sheltered on the north by a wide extent of forest, and overlooking that part of the river Ohio which separates the state from Kentucky. I remember even now the appearance of the country. On the eastern side was a range of hills of slight elevation, on one of which our house stood, while westward stretched away as far as the eye could reach, a vast plain, with the mighty Mississippi beyond. The scenery could boast of no great beauty except such as lofty trees, the prairie, with its varied tints of green and brown, yellow cornfields, rich meadows in the valleys, and the shining river in the distance, canopied by the blue vault of

heaven, could give it. Still, it was my home, and as such I should have loved it, had it possessed even less pretensions to beauty.

So well satisfied was my father with the country that he returned to Ireland to bring back a young lady who had promised to become his wife. Two or three years afterwards I was born, and was succeeded by my brother Dan, and finally by my dear little sister Kathleen. My mother, whose maiden name was O'Dwyer, was, I should have said, accompanied by her two brothers, Michael and Denis, who came out with the intention of assisting my father, and ultimately settling near him, but they were hot-headed young men, and before even they reached the farm they had a quarrel which resulted in their separation. Denis finally settled in Kentucky, while Michael, with a rifle on his shoulder and axe in his belt, saying that he should turn trapper, pushed away further west, and from that day to the time I am about to describe we had received no tidings from him. Uncle Denis became a successful settler. He was soon reconciled to my father, and occasionally paid us a visit, but preferred remaining in the location he had chosen to coming near us, as he had originally intended. He had remained a bachelor, not a very usual state of life for an Irishman; but, somehow or other he had not met the girl he "wished to marry," as he used to say. He was, notwithstanding, a merry, good-natured, kind-hearted man, and I remember that we always enjoyed his brief visits whenever he rode over on his fast-trotting cob to see us. Uncle Denis had not come for some time, when my father received a message from a doctor who was attending him, stating that if his sister wished to see him alive, she must come over immediately. My mother did not hesitate a moment, and my father agreed to drive her over in the waggon. I was to accompany them. Preparations were at once made for our departure, and as the Shawanees, long the foes of the white man in those regions, had buried the war-hatchet, and were not likely to come that way, the rest of the children were left without any apprehensions of danger, under the charge of our old black nurse, Rose.

The waggon was a long, light vehicle, with little or no iron-work about it, having benches across, and rails on either side. It had four wheels of equal size, and was drawn by a couple of horses harnessed to a pole; owing to the height and position of the two front wheels, we could not turn without making a long sweep.

My father sat on the box to drive. My mother and I occupied the front bench, and behind was stowed our luggage, provisions for

the journey, and various other articles, Although I was very young at the time, I have nevertheless a clear recollection of some of the incidents of the journey.

Descending by a thickly wooded valley to the level of the Ohio, we crossed that river in a large ferry-boat, which conveyed our horses and waggon at the same time, while my mother and I sat in the vehicle and my father stood at the head of the animals to keep them quiet. The stream carried us down for some distance, and I remember my mother holding me tight in her arms, and looking with terrified glances at the water as it whirled by, apparently about to sweep the lumbering boat far down below the point the rowers were endeavouring to gain. They exerted themselves, however, to the utmost. The boat's head was turned partly up the stream, and an eddy taking her, we at length reached the landing-place. My father then mounting the box, with voice and whip urged the horses up the steep bank, and once more the waggon rolled over tolerably even ground.

The country through which we passed was in those days almost in a state of nature, with the exception of the high road traversing the State from one end to the other. The first part lay across the "Barrens," a wild region, where the soil being inferior in fertility to that of the uplands, it was destitute of inhabitants. To the south extended a level prairie covered with long grass, with here and there groves of oak, chestnut, and elm. To the north the country appeared more undulating, clothed with a far greater variety of trees; hickory, black walnut, cherry, as well as magnificent oak and elm.

"I hope we shall not have another river to cross like that," observed my mother, after keeping silence for some time, while she was endeavouring to recover from her alarm.

"Not so broad a one, Kate," answered my father, "but there are several streams which we must manage to get over either by fords or ferry-boats, for I doubt whether we shall find any bridges as yet put up to drive over, though they will come in good time, I have no doubt. We run no danger just now, and I don't suppose that we shall have the least difficulty in crossing any stream in our way."

As we drove along we occasionally started a herd of deer feeding on the rich grass in the forest-glades. Hares in abundance crossed our path, and a fox slunk by, casting a suspicious glance at us, as he ran out of sight into a bush. Towards evening, as we were hoping soon to reach a log hut in

which we could pass the night, our ears were assailed by a long, low howl.

"Where can that come from?" exclaimed my mother.

"Possibly from a wolf; but I'll give a good account of the brute if he makes his appearance," answered my father; "hand me out my rifle."

My mother gave him the weapon, and he placed it by his side ready for use. He had also a brace of pistols stuck in his belt, so that he was prepared for an encounter either with wolves, bears, or any hostile Indians who might have ventured thus far eastward.

At last we found ourselves rumbling over a corduroy road, a sign that we were approaching human habitations. It was composed of the trunks of large trees, placed close together across the path, over a swampy place into which the wheels of carriages would otherwise have been imbedded. The interstices had originally been filled in with earth, clay, or chips of wood, but in many parts the small stuff had sunk through, so that the waggon moved on over a succession of ridges, on which it seemed a wonder that the horses could keep their legs, and that we could escape being jerked out. Sometimes a trunk, rotted by the wet, had given way and left a gap, to avoid which it required my father's utmost skill in driving. Occasionally, with all his care, he could not find a space wide enough to enable the wheels to pass. On such occasions, lashing his horses into a gallop, he made the waggon bound over it, crying out, as he came to the spot—

"Hold fast, Kate; don't let Mike be hove overboard."

The waggon was strong, and stood the jolting better than my poor mother did. She, however, bore all the bumping, jolting, and rolling with perfect good humour, knowing well that my father would spare her as much of it as he possibly could.

Darkness found us still on the road, although my father could still see his way between the tall trees. Scarcely had the sun set than we again heard that ominous howl, followed by sharp yelps.

"Oh! the wolves, the wolves!" cried my mother.

"Never fear," said my father, "they are arrant cowards, and there are no large packs hereabouts to do us harm."

The thought, however, that they might follow us, alarmed my mother, and she kept me close to her side, looking out anxiously behind, expecting every instant to see a hungry pack coming up in chase of us. My father, perhaps, was not quite easy on the subject; he kept shouting out, and in spite of the roughness of the road, made the horses go at a faster pace than before.

"Hurrah! I see a light ahead," he shouted at last; "that's the log hut we were told of; and even if the wolves do come, we shall be safe from them in a few minutes, for they will not approach a human habitation."

On we jolted; I could distinguish a clearing on the side where the light appeared, it grew brighter and stronger, and presently my father pulled up in front of a good-sized building, composed of huge logs placed one above another, with the doors and windows sawn out of them, and roofed with shingles, which are thin broad slabs of wood, split from the trunks of large trees.

"Can you afford us shelter for the night, friend?" said my father to a man, who, hearing the sound of wheels, came outside the door.

"Ay, and a welcome too, such as we give to all strangers who have money or money's worth to pay for their lodging, and I guess you've got that."

"Yes, I am ready to pay for our board and lodging, but I could not tell in the dark whether or not this was a house of entertainment."

"I guess it's the finest hotel you'll find between the Ohio and Harrodsburg," answered the man.

"All right," said my father; "I'll see my wife and child, as well as our goods, safe inside; then we'll take the horses and waggon round to the stables."

Saying this he helped my mother and me to the ground. We entered a large room with a huge cooking-stove at one end, and a long table down the middle, flanked by benches. A middle-aged woman, with three strapping girls, her daughters, advanced to meet us, and conducted my mother and me up to the stove, that we might warm ourselves; for as it was early in the year, the evening had set in cold. Our hostess talked away at a rapid rate, giving us all the news of the country, and inquiring what information we could afford her in return.

We found that we were still nearly another day's journey from Green River, after crossing which it would take us the best part of a third day to get to my uncle's location. Three or four other travellers came in, armed with bowie-knives, and pistols in their belts, each carrying a long gun, which he placed against the wall. A black man and a girl appeared, to serve at table, and we heard several others chattering outside, reminding us that we were in a slave-state. On my father's return he took his seat by my mother's side, and talked away to prevent me hearing the conversation which was going on between the other travellers at the further end of the table, which showed they were as rough in their manners as in their appearance. However, they did not otherwise interfere with us.

At an early hour my father begged to be shown a room.

"I guess it's not a very big one," answered our hostess; "but you and your wife won't mind a trifle like that. There's a bunk in the corner, in which your young one can stow himself away."

I remember the dismay with which I saw the bunk spoken of. It was in reality a huge chest with the top propped up, but I tumbled into it notwithstanding, and was soon fast asleep. At daybreak the next morning, after a substantial breakfast, in which fried eggs and Johnny cake formed an important item, we again started off over the same sort of corduroy road as on the previous evening. On either side were numerous clearings with log huts, and here and there a more pretentious store, before each of which several persons were seen taking their morning drams. My father was an abstemious man, and although invited to stop and liquor, declined doing so. We drove on as fast as the horses could go, as he was anxious to cross the river early in the day. The weather had hitherto been fine, but it now looked threatening, though as the day advanced the clouds blew off. My father told my mother that he hoped we should escape the storm.

About mid-day we stopped at another log shanty, similar to the one at which we had rested for the night, in order to bate the horses. We afterwards passed through several forests of considerable size, with more open wild land covered with low bushes, where the rocky soil afforded no depth for larger vegetation.

The country improved as we approached Green River, growing tobacco, Indian corn, flax, and buck-wheat, while the numerous parties of blacks we saw at work on plantations showed that the country was more thickly populated than any we had hitherto

passed through. From information my father gained, he understood that we should cross Green River by a ford without difficulty.

"The river is pretty broad about there, and the shallow is not very wide; so, stranger, you must keep direct for the landing-place, which you will see on the opposite side. Better drive up than down the stream, but better still to keep straight across," added his informant.

"Oh, Patrick, must you positively cross that wide extent of water?" exclaimed my mother as we reached the bank and she surveyed the broad river flowing by.

"There are marks of wheels on this side, and I make out an easy landing-place on the other," answered my father.

Having surveyed the ford, my father without hesitation drove in, telling my mother not to be afraid, as he did not suppose that the water would reach above the axles.

The stream as it flowed by, bubbled and hissed between the wheels, making me quite giddy to look at it. The water grew deeper and deeper until it reached the axles; then in a little time on looking down I saw it bubbling up through the bottom of the waggon.

My father did not turn his head, but keeping his eyes steadily fixed on the landing-place, urged on the horses. They had not got more than half-way over when they began to plunge in a manner which threatened to break the harness. Again my father shouted and applied his whip over their backs; the animals seemed every instant as if about to lose their legs, while the water not only bubbled up through the bottom, but completely flowed over it. To turn round was impossible, not only from the construction of the waggon, but from the pressure of water, and in all probability had the attempt been made an overturn would have been the consequence.

My mother suppressed her fears, but grasped me tighter than ever. Presently I heard a dull roar, and looking up the river I saw a white-crested wave—so it appeared—curling down upon us. My father saw it too. He leapt from the waggon into the water, which reached almost up to his shoulders, and seizing the horses' heads, endeavoured to drag them forward. Every instant the current became stronger and deeper and deeper. At last it seemed as if the waggon must inevitably be swept away down the stream. Just then I heard a shout from the shore,

where I saw a black man running rapidly towards us. Without stopping a moment he rushed into the water, wading as far as the depth would allow him, then he struck out swimming, and quickly reached the horses' heads.

"Here, massa stranger, nebber fear, dis boy help you," he exclaimed, and seizing the bridle of one of the animals he pointed to a spot, a little lower down the bank. My father, being taller than the negro, was still able, though with difficulty, to keep his feet, and grasping the bridle of the other horse, he followed the advice he had received. Before, however, we had gone far, the wave was upon us. The next instant the waggon was lifted up and jerked violently round. I had until then been holding on, but how it happened I cannot tell, for I felt myself suddenly thrown into the water. I heard my mother's shriek of frantic despair, and my father shouted to her to hold on for her life, while he dragged forward the horses, whose feet almost the next moment must have touched the firm ground.

"Me save him!" cried the black, "go on, massa stranger, go on, all safe now," and the brave fellow, relinquishing his hold of the horse, which he left to my father's guidance, swam off to where I was struggling in the seething water. With one arm he seized me round the waist, and keeping my head above the surface, struck out once more towards the bank. His feet fortunately soon regained the ground, and wading on while he pressed with all his might against the current, he carried me safely in his arms to the bank. Having placed me on the grass, he hastened back to assist my father in dragging up the waggon.

My mother, as may be supposed, had all the time been watching me with unspeakable anxiety, forgetting the danger in which she herself was placed. As the banks sloped very gradually, the horses, by a slight effort, contrived to drag the waggon up to the level ground.

"Blessings rest on your head, my brave man!" exclaimed my mother, addressing the black who had saved me, as she got out of the waggon and rushed to where I lay; then kneeling down, she gazed anxiously into my face.

I had suffered less I believe from immersion than from fear, for I had not for a moment lost my consciousness, nor had I swallowed much water.

"Berry glad to save de little boy, him all right now," answered the black.



"Yes, I believe I'm all right now. Thank you, thank you," I said, getting up.

My mother threw her arms round my neck and burst into tears.

My father wrung the hand of the black, who had hurried back to help him rearrange the harness of the horses. "You have saved the lives of us all, my gallant friend; I thank you from my heart, and should wish to show you my gratitude by any means in my power."

"Oh, massa, him one poor black slave," answered the negro, astonished at being so spoken to by a white man; "him berry glad to save de little boy. Now, massa, you all berry wet, want get dry clo' or catch cold an' die ob de fever."

"Indeed I am most anxious to get my wife and child under the shelter of some roof;" answered my father. "Can you guide us to the nearest house where we can obtain what we require?"

The black thought a moment, and then answered—

"De plantation where I slave not far off; Massa Bracher not at home—better 'way perhaps, he not always in berry good temper, but de housekeeper, Mammy Coe, she take care ob de lady and de little boy. Yes, we will go dare dough de oberseer make me back feel de lash 'cos I go back without carry de message I was sent on. It can wait, no great ting."

I do not believe that my father heard the last remark of the black, as he was engaged in replacing some of the articles in the waggon which had escaped being washed out, for he answered—

"Yes, by all means, we will drive on to Mr Bracher's plantation. It's not very far off, I hope, for the sooner we can get on dry clothing the better."

My father, as he helped in my mother, and placed me in her arms, threw his own coat, wet as it was, over me, as it served to keep off the wind and was better than nothing.

"What's your name, my good fellow?" he asked of the black.

"Me Diogenes, massa, but de folks call me 'Dio'."

"Well, jump in, Dio, and tell me the way I am to drive."

"Straight on den, Massa," said Dio, climbing in at the hinder part of the waggon, "den turn to de right, and den to de lef', and we are at Massa Bracher's."

My father drove on as fast as the horses could go, for although the weather was tolerably warm, my teeth were chattering with cold and fright, and he was anxious, wet as we were, not to expose my mother and me to the night air. By following Dio's directions, in less than ten minutes we reached a house of more pretensions than any we had yet seen. It was of one story, and raised on a sort of platform above the ground with a broad veranda in front. Behind it was a kitchen-garden, and plantations of tobacco, and fields of corn on either side. Dio, jumping out, ran to the horses' heads, and advised my mother to go first, taking me with her, and to introduce herself to Mammy Coe.

"Yes, go, Kathleen," said my father, "the good woman will certainly not turn us away, although from what Dio says, she may not receive us very courteously."

The door stood open; as we ascended the wooden steps, two huge blood-hounds rushed out, barking furiously, but Dio's voice kept them from molesting us. The noise they made served to summon "Mammy Coe," a brown lady of mature age, a degree or two removed from a negress, dressed, as I thought, in very gay colours, with a handkerchief of bright hue bound round her head, forming a sort of turban.

"Who you strangers, whar you come from?" she asked in an authoritative tone, as if accustomed to command.

My mother, in a few words, explained what had happened. "We should be thankful to you to allow us to have our clothes dried," she added.

"Yas, strangers, me will gib you dat permission," answered Mammy Coe; "come 'long dis way. Your man too, him want change him clo'," she said, looking out and perceiving my father standing on the steps, still dripping wet. "Dio," she shouted, "take de horses round to de stable and bring in de strangers' tings."

Dio promptly obeyed, glad, I am very sure, that his kind intentions had thus far been successful.

"Come 'long, young woman, and bring de boy. You shall hab supper afterwards, den go to bed, you all right to-morrow."

She led the way to a bed-room on one side of the entrance-hall, where my mother quickly stripped off my wet clothes and wrapped me up in a blanket.

"Him better for some broth!" observed Mammy Coe in a kinder tone than she had yet used. "Now, young woman, you go to me room, and me give you some dry clothes, while your man, him go into Massa Bracher's room."

My father, however, first came and had a look at me and almost the minute afterwards I was fast asleep. When I awoke I saw a person standing near me, dressed so exactly like Mammy Coe, that at first I thought it was her, but I quickly discovered that she was my mother. She had brought me my clothes perfectly dry. I was very glad to put them on and accompany her to supper in the great hall, where several not very pleasant-looking personages were seated at a long table, with Mammy Coe at the head of it. The people appeared to me much alike, with sallow faces, long hair, untrimmed beards, and bowie-knives stuck in their belts. I remember remarking that they gobbled down their food voraciously, and put a number of questions to my father, which he answered in his usual calm way.

Supper was nearly over when the barking of dogs announced another arrival. Soon afterwards a tall man wearing a broad-brimmed hat entered the room, and nodding to the other persons, threw his whip into the corner and took the seat which Mammy Coe vacated. He stared at my mother and me. My father rose, concluding that he was the host, and explained how he happened to be his guest, while Mammy Coe stood by ready to answer any questions if required. My father narrated our adventures, stating that we were on our way to visit my mother's brother, who was supposed to be at the point of death.

"I know Denis O'Dwyer, I guess. He was down with the fever I heard, but whether he's gone or not I can't say. Some pull through and some don't. If you find him alive it's a wonder. However, make yourself at home here, and to-morrow you may start on your journey," observed our host.

My father thanked him, and remarked how much he was indebted to his slave Dio.

"The boy's good property, I guess," answered Mr Bracher, but not a word did he say of the black's gallant conduct, and only laughed scornfully when my father alluded to it.

Our host spoke but little during the remainder of the time we sat at table, being employed as zealously as his overseers and clerks had been in devouring his food. My father then again reverted to Dio, and observed that he was anxious to make a suitable return to the black for the brave way in which he had risked his life in preserving ours.

"He is my property and you may thank me, but I don't want thanks and I don't want a recompense, though I should have lost well-nigh five hundred dollars if he had been drowned."

"Will you take five hundred dollars for the boy?" asked my father feeling sure that unless he could obtain the slave, he should have no means of rewarding him.

"No, stranger, I guess I won't," answered Mr Bracher, putting a quid, which he had been working into form, into his mouth; "I don't want money, and I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for the black if I did: so you have your answer."

My father saw that it would not do farther to press the subject. As soon as he properly could, he begged that my mother and I might be allowed to retire.

"This is liberty hall, and your wife can do as she likes, and so can you. I shall turn in myself before long, as I have had a pretty smart ride."

On this my mother rose, and I had to return to my bunk, in which I was soon fast asleep. Next morning I remember looking out of the window just at daybreak and seeing a party of negroes mustered before being despatched to their respective labours. Two white overseers, dressed in broad-brimmed hats and gingham jackets, stood by with whips in their hands, giving directions to the slaves, and at the same time bestowing not a few lashes on their backs, if they did not at once comprehend what was said to them. Among them I caught sight of Dio. One of the overseers addressed him, and seemed to be putting questions to which satisfactory answers were not given. To my horror down came the lash on Dio's back, cut after cut being given with all the strength of the white man's arm.

"O father, father, they are beating Dio. Do go out and stop the cruel man," I exclaimed. My father looked on for a moment, and then hurried out to the front of the house. I followed him, but Dio had disappeared and the overseer was walking along whistling in the direction one party of the blacks had taken.

"The poor fellow would only be worse treated were I to speak for him," said my father stopping short; "but it is terrible that human beings should thus be tyrannised over by their fellow-creatures. It may not be against man's laws, but it is against God's law, I am very certain. The sooner we are away from this the better, but I should like to see poor Dio before we go, and again thank him for the service he has rendered us."

We went round to the stables, where we found Dio, who was grooming the horses. My father, finding that no one else was present, put several dollars into his hand.

"That's no return, my friend, for the brave way in which you risked your life to save ours," he said; "but I have nothing else except my bare thanks to give you. You must remember, however, that I wish always to remain your friend, and if I have the power, to repay you in a more substantial manner."

"Dis black boy no want any reward," answered Dio, offering to return the money.

My father, however, pressed it on him, and without much difficulty induced him to keep it. As soon as breakfast was over, the horses were brought round. I believe that my mother made a present to Mammy Coe of the gayest article of dress she possessed, which she guessed would be far more welcome than money.

Our host treated us with but scant courtesy as we took our departure.

"Just tell Denis O'Dwyer, if you find him alive, that you saw me, and that I hope to liquor up with him next time I go his way."

My father thanked him for his hospitality, but he made no reply, and turning on his heel, re-entered his house. We found Dio, who had run on, waiting for us out of sight of the house. He waved his hand, but said nothing.

Eager to reach Uncle Denis's farm, my father drove on as fast as the horses could trot over the rough track. We had to endure the same amount of bumping and jolting as on the previous day. My poor mother's anxiety increased as we approached my uncle's farm. We met with no one who could give us any information. Since the fearful danger we had been in, she had become much more nervous than was her wont, and consequently could not help expecting to hear the worst. Great was her joy, therefore, when, on driving up to the door, who

should we see but Uncle Denis himself seated in the porch, smoking a cigar.

"I'm glad to see you, sister," he said, "but Doctor O'Dowd had no business to frighten you. He is always so accustomed to kill his patients that he fancies they are all going to die under his hand, and faith, it's no fault of his if they get well."

My uncle's appearance, however, showed that he had gone through a severe illness. He was still too weak to walk without assistance, but his indomitable spirit, my father observed, had done much to keep him up; our coming also was of great assistance, as my mother was able to nurse him more carefully than were his usual black attendants. We remained with him for several days, at the end of which time he was able to mount his horse and take a gallop with my father in the early morning. Uncle Denis was one of the kindest-hearted men I ever met, and generally one of the merriest; but a shade of melancholy came over him occasionally. It was when he thought of Uncle Michael, or of that "dear fellow, Mike," as he used to say. He believed himself to have been in the wrong, and to have been the cause of his brother's leaving him, without taking an opportunity of acknowledging that such was the case, and asking for his forgiveness.

My father and mother of course described to Uncle Denis the narrow escape we had had in crossing the river, and the somewhat doubtful style of hospitality with which we had been received by Mr Bracher.

"He knows you, Denis," said my father.

"And I know him," answered my uncle; "a more surly curmudgeon does not exist in these parts, or a harder master to his slaves. He is a man people wish to stand well with, not because they love him, but because they fear his vengeance should they offend him. I make a point of keeping out of his way, for fear that he should pick a quarrel with me, though he pretends to be friendly enough when we meet. The slaves hate him, as well they may, but the lash keeps them in order, and he has a set of fellows about him of his own kidney, who serve him because no one else would willingly employ them."

This no very flattering account of our late host made my father determine not to pay him another visit, if he could help it, on our return.

"I'll follow your example and keep out of his way," observed my father, "though I should have been glad to make another attempt to purchase his slave Dio, for the sake of getting the brave fellow out of his power."

"The more desirous you appear to obtain the slave the less likely will he be to part with him, so I would advise you not to allude again to the subject," said my uncle. "I'll keep an eye on his proceedings, and, should he at any time suffer losses and be obliged to sell up, I'll take means to buy Dio, not letting his master know that you want to become his owner."

With this arrangement my father was obliged to rest satisfied, as he saw that there was no other chance of getting Dio out of the power of his tyrannical master.

A few days after this conversation Uncle Denis was so far recovered, that my father announced his intention of returning home.

"Stay a few days longer; don't think of going yet," answered Uncle Denis; "it seems but yesterday that you came, and I shall feel more lonely than ever when you are gone; besides, you haven't seen the great wonder of our part of the country, nor have I forsooth, and I should like to pay it a visit with you."

"Of what wonder do you speak?" asked my father.

"Sure, of the big caves we have deep down in the earth, a few miles only from this. It is said there are mountains, rivers and lakes within them, and I don't know what besides."

"Oceans, forests, and valleys, perhaps," said my father, laughing, and scarcely crediting the account my uncle gave him; for at that time the wonderful Mammoth Caves of Kentucky were unknown to the world in general, although the native Indians might have been acquainted with them, and some time before, a mine of saltpetre at the entrance had been discovered. My mother, more to please Uncle Denis than from any expected pleasure to herself; agreed to accompany him, and to my great delight, they promised to take me.

We were to perform the trip in two or three days, and Uncle Denis said that in the meantime he would try and find means of amusing us. We went all over the farm, on which he grew tobacco, maize, and other cereals. He was a great sportsman, besides which he had a fancy for trapping birds and animals, and taming them, when he could. In this he was wonderfully

successful; he had a large menagerie of the feathered tribe as well as numbers of four-footed beasts which he had trapped and contrived to domesticate. His ambition was to tame a panther, a bear, and a wolf; but as yet he had not succeeded in taking any of them young enough, as he said, to be taught good manners.

"Perhaps if you had a lady to help you, you would be more successful," observed my mother, "like Orpheus of old, who charmed the savage beasts. She would with her voice produce a greater effect on their wild natures than any man can do."

"I'll think about it," said Uncle Denis, looking up and laughing.

My mother's great wish was to see Uncle Denis married happily, though where to find a wife to suit him, or, as she would have said, "good enough for him," was the difficulty. There were no lack of excellent girls in Kentucky, daughters of settlers, but they could seldom boast of much education or refinement of manners, and Uncle Denis was a gentleman in every sense of the word; at the same time that he had as much spirit and daring as any Kentuckian born.

It must be understood of course, that at the time I speak of, I was too young to understand these matters, but I heard of them afterwards from my mother, and am thus able to introduce them in their proper place in my history.

Uncle Denis took great delight in showing us his various traps and snares, as well as other means he employed for capturing birds or animals.

The traps had been greatly neglected during his illness. I remember being especially delighted with what he called his "pens," which he had erected for the capture of wild turkeys, with which the neighbouring woods abounded. The two first we came to contained birds lately caught; the third was empty, and the fourth had been broken into by a hungry wolf, which had carried off the captive.

"There is another I built the day before I was taken ill, further away in the forest. No one but myself knows of it," observed Uncle Denis; "we'll pay a visit to it, though I am much afraid if a bird has been caught, it must have starved to death by this time."

The pens Uncle Denis was speaking of were simple structures formed like a huge cage by poles stuck in the ground sufficiently close together to prevent a bird from getting out. They were



roofed over by boughs and leaves, and were without doors or windows. It will then be asked, how can a bird get in? The trap is entered in this way.

A passage or trench is cut in the ground twelve or fourteen feet in length, passing under the wall of the hut and rising again in its centre. Inside the wall and over the trench, a bridge is thrown. To induce the bird to enter, grain is strewn along the trench and scattered about its neighbourhood, while a larger quantity is placed on the floor inside the hut. The unwary turkey, on seeing the grains of corn, picks them up, and not suspecting treachery follows the train until it finds itself inside the pen; instead however of endeavouring to escape by the way it entered, it, like other wild birds, runs round and round the walls of the hut, peeping through the interstices and endeavouring to force its way out, each time crossing over the bridge without attempting to escape by the only practicable outlet. In this way Uncle Denis said that he had caught numbers of birds, one and all having acted in the same foolish manner.

"Hereabouts is my forest pen," he said. "Hark! I hear some curious clucking sounds. There's more than one bird there, or I am much mistaken." Stepping forward he peered over the branches, when he beckoned us to advance, and, he lifting me in his arms, I saw not only a hen turkey in the pen, but a brood of a dozen or more turkey poults running in and out among the bars, while the hen was evidently calling to them, suspecting that danger was near.

They were too young to fly up into the trees, which they do on being alarmed, when scarcely more than a fortnight old. Uncle Denis was highly pleased.

"I shall have a fine addition to the poultry-yard," he said, "for I shall tame all these young ones by cutting their wings, and they will not be able to follow their mother into the woods, so for their sake she will probably be content to share their captivity."

Peter, a black boy, had accompanied us, and Uncle Denis sent him back for a couple of baskets. The turkey hen, though much alarmed, having gathered her poults under her wings, stood ready to defend them bravely. Uncle Denis said that she had probably got into the pen directly after he had last seen it, and he recollected having left inside a quantity of corn, with which he was going to bait some other pens in the neighbourhood. This had served to keep her alive, unless perhaps her faithful mate had brought her food. If such was the case, the "gobbler," as the male bird is called, took good care to keep out of our

way. Wild turkeys in those days abounded through the whole of the southern states. I have often seen—of course I speak of a subsequent time of my life—ten or a dozen hen turkeys, with their families amounting to eighty or a hundred head, on their annual migration, old and young moving in the same direction, making use of their legs in preference to their wings, unless when intercepted by a river, or frightened by the appearance of a hunter and his dogs. On reaching a river they climb to some neighbouring height, where they remain for a day or two to consult apparently as to the best means of getting across: on such occasions the males making a loud gobbling noise, strutting about looking very important, as if about to perform some heroic action. At last, when they have settled their plan, the birds of all ages mount to the tops of the highest trees bordering the stream. There they sit for a short time, when their leader gives a loud “cluck.” It is the signal to commence the adventurous passage. Together they expand their wings and rise in the air; the stronger birds will thus cross a river a mile wide, but some of the younger ones find it impossible to sustain themselves so long in the air, and fall flop into the water. Serious as this misadventure may appear, being birds of spirit, they do not give up the attempt in despair. Closing their wings, they spread out their broad tails, and strike away with their feet towards the bank they desire to reach. Should they find, as is sometimes the case, that the bank is too steep for landing, they cease their exertions and allow themselves to float down the stream until they reach an accessible part, when by violent efforts they manage to scramble up the banks and regain the main body. On such occasions, should any of their human or other enemies be on the watch for them, they are easily taken, as they are too much exhausted to fly away and have not regained their shore legs. On landing also they do not appear at first to know what direction to take, and are seen rambling about, sometimes up the stream, sometimes down it, or making an uncertain run inland. Of all the birds of America, the turkey deserves the pre-eminence: the plumage, a golden bronze, banded with black, and shot with violet, green, and blue, is beautiful in the extreme. We had scarcely done admiring our captive, when Peter returned with two large baskets, into one of which the hen turkey was trundled in spite of the fierce use she made of her beak and claws, while her brood, who were too much bewildered to run away, were caught and secured in the other. We returned home with our unwilling captives. Uncle Denis at once had a pen put up, and in a few days the young turkeys appeared perfectly reconciled to their lot, and Uncle Denis succeeded in domesticating them: as for the old hen, one day early in the following spring, a loud “gobbling” being heard

in the distance, she, leaping up on a pailing, spread her wings and flew away in the direction from whence the sounds came. Her brood, then more than half-grown, would have followed her example, but their wings were cut, and down they toppled on their backs, greatly to the amusement of Peter, as Uncle Denis afterwards told us.

The day for our excursion to the wonderful Cave arrived, and having breakfasted by candle-light, we set off before sunrise in a waggon, attended by Peter and Caesar, another black boy, on horseback. Uncle Denis drove, and it needed an expert whip to get along the rough road. On coming to the farm, we had been bumped and jolted enough to dislocate our limbs, had we not had some soft cushions to sit upon. We were now tumbled about in a fashion which threatened to upset the waggon. Uncle Denis shouted out—

“Never fear, the machine is accustomed to it, and will go over places ten times as bad as this is. Hold fast though, in case of accidents.”

Sometimes we crossed what might have been called, in compliment, a piece of corduroy, though it looked more as if trees had been blown down by a hurricane in close ranks. On other occasions we had to twist and turn in and out among the stumps, and fly over big holes, the well-trained horses keeping their feet in the most wonderful manner. At last we reached a hut, where in subsequent years a fine hotel was built. As we pulled up before it, a tall Indian appeared and, asking if we wished to see the cavern, volunteered to act as our guide.

“You’re the man we want,” answered Uncle Denis.

On this the Indian, retiring to his hut, returned with a bundle of torches. We had brought a couple of lanterns and a supply of candles, so that there was no chance of our being left in darkness.

The two negro boys having taken charge of our horses, we proceeded on foot, followed by Peter and Caesar, to the mouth of the pit down which we were to descend into the cavern. This was like a large well into which a stream fell with a cheerful splash. I remember asking not unnaturally whether we should have to swim when we got to the bottom.

We made our way down a flight of wooden steps, when, passing under a high archway, we proceeded along a level road to what were called the “vats,” where saltpetre was manufactured.

The torches lighted up the subterranean region in which we found ourselves. As to describing it exactly is more than I can pretend to do. From the large entrance-hall we made our way through a low narrow passage, which is known as the Valley of Humility, into another hall of enormous extent, the roof so lofty that our torches scarcely illuminated either the walls or roof. At our feet we could see the glitter of water extending far away into the interior, while a bright stream flowed over a rocky bed into it. Uncle Denis proposed that we should sit down and refresh ourselves preparatory to exploring the interior recesses of the cavern. No objection being made, Peter produced some provisions from a basket he had brought on his back. Having discussed them, we slaked our thirst from the pure water of the rivulet. Once more moving on, in a short time we reached Echo River, on the shore of which we found a boat. Our guide invited us to embark. Looking upwards it appeared as if a canopy of black clouds hung over our heads, while on every side we could see precipices and cliffs rising up, apparently into the sky; silence and darkness reigned around us, the smooth sluggish water alone reflecting the glare of our torches. Not a word was uttered by any of our party, until the Indian's voice suddenly burst forth into one of the melancholy chants of his race, echoed as it appeared by the spirit of his departed brethren. I clung to my father's arm, and asked where all those sounds came from.

"They are but the echoes of the Indian's voice," he answered. Now they rose, now they fell, as he gave forth the notes with the full force of his lungs, or warbled softly, sometimes finishing with a melancholy wail which produced the most mournful effect.

"Come, this is more than I bargained for," exclaimed Uncle Denis; "now stand by for a different kind of sound. Don't be alarmed, it's only the barrel of my pistol going to try what sort of noise it can make." He pulled the trigger, when there was a flash and then there came a succession of crashing, thundering sounds echoed from every angle in those enormous vaults. Backwards and forwards tore the sounds, rolling and reverberating from wall to wall with terrific crashes. Half a dozen pieces of artillery fired in the open air could not have produced a more tremendous uproar.

Scarcely had the sounds died away, when Peter and Caesar struck up a merry negro melody, contrasting curiously with the melancholy notes of the Indian's song; they made Uncle Denis and me, at all events, burst in to hearty fits of laughter.

"Come, I like that style of song far better than the music of our red-skin friend," exclaimed my uncle. The guide told us that although it was perfectly safe at most times of the year to traverse the cavern, there were occasions when the waters rising suddenly had prevented the return of explorers, but that a way had been discovered, through a narrow passage, the course evidently at one time of a stream, up which they could climb over the mud and save themselves from being either drowned or starved, should they have come without provisions. This passage has appropriately been called "Purgatory," but as we had not to take advantage of it, I cannot describe it more fully.

Leaving "Echo" River we entered another cavern named "Cleveland's Cabinet," when we found ourselves in what we might have taken for a fairy region.

Above our heads and on either side, the roof and walls were adorned with delicate flowers of snowy whiteness, and domes, and turrets, and spires, and shrubs, and trees, as well as the forms of birds and beasts of all descriptions; elephants and camels, eagles and turkeys and doves; indeed figures of every shape which imagination without any great exertion might please to picture. The representations of some indeed were so perfect that it was difficult to believe that they had not been carved by the hand of man, and yet one and all were produced by the dripping of water from the gypsum rock; the most delicate ice formations could not surpass them; indeed many equalled in form the choicest flowers growing in the most cultivated garden. As we proceeded on, we found that the cavern was not destitute of inhabitants. Huge crickets and spiders, almost of a white colour, crawled over the ground, the former not taking jumps, but moving steadily forward with their long legs. Rats too, Uncle Denis declared they were as big as leverets, ran by us, exhibiting their sharp teeth and extensive tails. When no other provisions are to be obtained, they live apparently on the spiders and crickets.

The next cavern we entered was called "Martha's Vineyard;" the trunk of a vine climbed up the sides, and spread its branches over the roof from which hung suspended what looked like clusters of delicious grapes. Seeing also several which appeared to have fallen on the ground, I ran forward to examine them, when what was my disappointment to find that they were of a stony nature, thus formed by the dropping of the water. In another cave our guide, having lighted two of the largest torches, waved them about, when we appeared to be standing

in a wintry scene. Ice above us, ice on the ground, with here and there patches of snow.

We did not get nearly to the end of the cavern, and therefore missed seeing a beautiful grotto which our guide told us was called "Serena's Arbour," and that the walls are covered with a drapery resembling yellow satin falling in graceful folds, while through it murmurs a rivulet, falling into one of the many rivers running through the cavern, which is said to be nine miles in extent. It appeared to me that we had been walking all day amid vast towering rocks. Often the roof was so far above us that even the light of our torches failed to reach it. We now entered another hall, when our guide told us to seat ourselves on some rocks and to extinguish our lights.

"Don't be alarmed," he said; "I'm not going to be guilty of treachery."

My father and Uncle Denis agreed to his proposal, and there we sat far down in the depths of the earth, not a ray of light reaching us. I could feel my mother's hand, but although I placed it close to my eyes, I could not see it. After waiting some time I began to grow uneasy, when greatly to my relief the guide returned with a lantern in his hand.

"Look up!" he said, "see to what a region I have transported you."

On gazing upwards, we saw stars innumerable glittering in the sky, so it seemed, but in vain we looked for those to which our eyes were accustomed, though it was difficult to persuade ourselves that they were not veritable stars. The guide, holding a stone in his hand, threw it upwards, when it struck the roof above our heads, and we found that the seeming stars were produced by pieces of mica imbedded in the roof on which the light from the lantern, being thrown in a peculiar way, was brightly reflected.

Relighting our torches, we saw that the walls were of a yellow colour, while the ceiling appeared to be of a dark undefined blue, resembling the midnight sky. We visited several other caverns, some of which appeared to be of immense height, though the ceiling in most parts is not more than thirty feet from the ground.

One cavern had, what looked like a mountain in that subterranean region, rising from the ground, with a stream running at its base. We crossed several rivers; besides the

"Echo," one called the "Styx," the other the "Lethe." Our guide had brought a net, with which he caught some fish and crawfish. On examining them we could discover no appearance of eyes, while, from being deprived of the warm rays of the sun, they were perfectly white. Uncle Denis remarked that as they had no lamps down there, eyes would have been useless, but their instinct, or probably their keen sense of feeling, told them when they were running into danger. The crickets which came hopping about around us, could however, we ascertained, see perfectly well, and appeared to be attracted by the light of our lanterns. They were not pleasant-looking creatures, and if the rats can find nothing else to eat, they must have an uncomfortable life of it. The guide told us that the cave was not known to white men until 1802, though he did not acknowledge that the natives were ignorant of its existence. For many years no one could advance beyond three miles from the entrance, further progress being stopped by a deep chasm called the "Bottomless Pit." At length, however, a daring guide threw a ladder over it, and thus getting across, he explored six more miles of this underground region. A bridge has now been constructed, by which people can pass over in perfect safety. He asserted that no dog would willingly enter the cavern, and that although he had made the attempt several times to induce his own faithful animal to follow him, the creature had always run back howling with dismay. We readily believed this, and for my part I felt oppressed with a sensation of awe I had never before experienced, and which I can to this day vividly recollect. I have since, more than once, visited that subterranean world, and though aware that its dimensions are not so great as I then imagined, and that there was no real danger to be apprehended, I have on each occasion felt awestruck, though in a less degree than formerly.

My father and mother acknowledged that they were thankful when we regained the upper world, and Uncle Denis gave a shout of satisfaction as he inhaled the fresh air of heaven, while the black boys leapt and laughed, and tumbled against each other, as they hurried off to harness the horses to the waggon.

"Fine place dat, Caesar, for niggas to hide away if de white massa not know it," observed Peter to his companion.

"Berry good for hide 'way, but bad for de food; nothing but rats and crickets to eat dare."

Uncle Denis, jumping up on the box, shouted "Erin-go-bragh," and away we dashed as fast as we had come. It was dark long before we reached the farm; my mother appeared pretty well

tired out. We remained a couple of days more to recruit, and then set out on our return home. Uncle Denis accompanied us part of the first day's journey.

"Keep clear of Master Silas Bracher," he observed as we were about to part. "I have no wish to meet him again, for he is more likely to pick a quarrel and send a bullet through a man's body than to do him any good."

"I'll follow your advice," answered my father; "I wish from my heart, though, that I could get the black, Dio, out of his power. I really believe that he is jealous of the poor slave."

"You may as well try to draw sunbeams out of a cucumber, as to get him to agree to your offer; keep clear of him altogether, and should I have the chance, I will not forget your wish to obtain the black, whom, should I succeed, you can either set free or keep in bondage, as you may decide; probably, were you to give him his choice, he would prefer remaining your slave."

After an affectionate farewell, Uncle Denis turned his horse's head, and rode back, while we continued our journey to "Uphill," the name my father had given to his property. Avoiding Mr Bracher's location, we drove down to the ford, and as the water was much lower than when we before crossed it, we got over in safety, though my mother naturally felt very nervous as we were making the passage.

We found all going on well at home, Martin Prentis, the overseer, also giving a favourable account of affairs on the estate. It may seem strange that, young as I then was, I should be able to give so minute an account of some of the incidents of our journey: but in the first place they made a deep impression on me; in the second, my parents have since assisted me to brush up my recollections of those days.

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## Chapter Two.

**Life at Uphill—Our tutor—Mr Mark Tidey's first lesson in Horsemanship—Studies from the book of Nature—Our trips westward—A Strange Combat—A Hasty Shot—Something worth knowing about Snakes—Camping out—The Bear's visit and its result—Wolves—Drawing lots—A Sleepless Night—**



**Timely Assistance—Dying from Hunger—Consequences of  
sheltering a Runaway Slave—Our Tutor turns Nurse—  
Chances of Discovery—We part Company—A mid-day Halt—  
An Unpleasant Meeting—The Bully receives a Lesson—Our  
March Homewards—The Way Dan kept Watch—We reach the  
Farm.**

We had been living at Uphill for some years, the wilderness had been changed into a smiling garden, though I will not say a perfect paradise, for I am very sure that no such spot exists on earth. Our education had not been neglected, for my father had engaged a tutor for Dan and me, when we grew too old for the instruction our mother could give us. Our father was too much engaged to attend regularly to our studies, though very well able himself to teach us. Mr Mark Tidey, our tutor, was a character; he was fond of field-sports, but fonder still of books, and had an aptitude for teaching which many professed tutors do not possess. For the sake of indulging in both his fancies, he undertook to instruct us at a very moderate stipend. My father had found him during one of his journeys eastward at a wayside store—which he had visited for the purpose of obtaining a supply of powder and shot—without a cent in his pocket to pay for it. He had been endeavouring to persuade the storekeeper that he would return in the course of a week with a number of skins amply sufficient to pay his debts; but the wary trader, looking at his ungainly figure and discovering that he was a "Britisher," was unwilling to trust him. Finding that all his arguments were useless, taking a book from his pocket, he had sat down in a corner of the store, philosophically to console himself by its perusal. My father entering found him thus engaged, and glancing his eye on the book, his surprise was considerable to find that it was a copy of one of the Greek classics. My father addressed the stranger, and soon discovered that he was a well-informed man. After some further conversation, he was pretty well satisfied that he was also an honest one. Mr Tidey, finding a person who could sympathise with him, poured forth the history of his adventures and misfortunes. He had come over to America with the intention of establishing a school, but his slender means had been almost exhausted before he could obtain any pupils, his attainments indeed being at that time such as were not generally required in the States. Believing that he could replenish his exhausted exchequer more satisfactorily by means of his gun than in any other way, he had come westward; but the game of which he was in search he found had been driven further into the wilderness than he had expected, and an illness of some weeks'

duration had entirely emptied his purse. He had notwithstanding, trudged boldly forward, though the game he killed had been barely sufficient to supply himself with the necessaries of life. From several letters and other documents which he exhibited, my father, being convinced that Mr Tidey had given a true account of himself, invited him to Uphill farm. The poor man jumped at the offer.

"With all the pleasure in the world, my dear sir," he answered, the tears starting to his eyes. "You have boys to teach, I'll teach them. If you've game to be shot, I'll shoot it. If you've accounts to be kept, I'll keep them. If you've any other work to be performed, which a gentleman and a man of honour can perform, I'll undertake it. You would not ask me, I am sure, to do anything derogatory to my character."

My father, however, did not accept his offer at once, wishing to see more of the stranger before he confided us to his care.

"I have a spare horse, and shall be happy if you will accompany me to Uphill," said my father.

"I am not much accustomed to equestrian exercise, but I'll try," answered Mr Tidey; "and unless you have five-bar gates to leap, and the boundless prairie to gallop over, I trust that I shall stick on the back of the animal. I don't like to be defeated, and I should not like to abandon the undertaking on account of my want of equestrian skill. Practice makes perfect; in the course of a few days I may perchance become an expert horseman."

As dinner was about to be served, my father invited Mr Tidey to join him, and from the voracious way in which he shovelled the food into his mouth, it was very evident that he had long been a stranger to a satisfactory meal.

The horses being rested, my father ordered Peter, who had left my Uncle's service, to bring out the steed he intended for his new acquaintance. Mr Tidey showed his ignorance of horsemanship by attempting, in the first instance, to mount from the wrong side, until a hint from Peter made him try the other, when, aided by the black, he scrambled up into the saddle. My father had advised him to let Peter carry his rifle and his slightly furnished knapsack, a fortunate circumstance, as was proved by the sequel. As long as the horse continued walking Mr Tidey kept his seat with becoming dignity, endeavouring to imitate the way my father held his rein, though he shoved his feet far into the stirrups. At length, coming to an even piece of road, my father put his horse into a trot. For some

minutes Mr Tidey bore the jolting to which the movement subjected him with wonderful patience, until my father heard him shriek out—

"O captain, captain! for the love of heaven stop, or I shall be worn down to the bones."

My father accordingly drew up, to allow his companion to recover himself. After a time he again proposed moving forward.

"I'll try, captain, I'll try," was the answer, "*fortes fortuna juvat*; but I wish that my steed could manage to move forward in a fashion less calculated to stir up the bile in my system, than that he has hitherto adopted."

"A canter, or an easy gallop would suit you best," answered my father; "try him with a touch of your whip behind, and give a gentle jerk with your left rein. Now, away we go!" and both steeds broke into a canter, exchanging it in a short time for a gallop.

"Very pleasant, very pleasant; I only hope that my nag won't run away altogether," said Mr Tidey.

"No fear of that," answered my father; "keep a sufficiently tight hold on your rein, and he'll go on well enough."

As long as the ground was level his companion stuck on to admiration, but at length, coming to a rough part, his steed gave a bound over it, swerving on one side and shooting his rider, fortunately, into the middle of a bush, from which my father saw him struggling desperately to get free. Having caught the horse, my father pulled up.

"*Nil desperandum*! I'll try again," cried Mr Tidey; "but I should be obliged to the animal not to play me such another trick."

"You must be prepared for such tricks," answered my father, calling Peter to hold the horse.

The Dominie at once bravely remounted, and the party moved forward, but before long he was again pitched off into the bed of a stream which flowed by the road-side, happily without any other damage than a thorough wetting.

"It won't do, captain, it won't do!" he cried; "I must trust to my feet, and I may hope some day or other to reach your

hospitable home. Give me directions how to find it, and let me have my gun and the ammunition you were kind enough to obtain for me, and I doubt not but that in due course I shall present myself at your gate; the exercise will dry my clothes, and my gun will afford me as much food as I require; I am accustomed to the vicissitudes of fortune."

My father being anxious to get home, and suspecting that Mr Tidey would still further delay him, somewhat reluctantly consented to his proposal, and slipping a couple of dollars into his hand, told Peter to give him back his rifle and knapsack, with his powder-horn and shot-belt.

"A thousand thanks, a thousand thanks!" exclaimed Mr Tidey; "I shall think better of the world in future than I have been inclined to do for some time past."

On leaving Mr Tidey my father had some doubts whether he should ever see him again. He had, however, thought on his way home of the conversation which had taken place between them, and came to the conclusion that he was honest. That he intended to fulfil his promise was proved by his appearance about ten days afterwards, with a load on his back.

"I've not been idle, captain, I was anxious to return your kindness," he said. "The country abounds with game, and I could live here in contentment for the rest of my days, provided I could occasionally indulge in a little literary recreation."

From that day Mr Tidey became domesticated in our family. My father being convinced that he was a man of sterling worth, we were duly placed under his care, and immediately he set to work to afford us the instruction which it must be confessed we at the time greatly needed. We made rapid progress, an evidence that he possessed the art of teaching; and, as Kathleen grew older, she also came in for her lessons.

Mr Tidey was of opinion, much to our satisfaction, that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy; and we consequently spent a portion of each day in shooting or trapping, often making excursions to a considerable distance from home. Sometimes in summer we camped out for several days together. On these occasions we gained a considerable amount of information from our worthy tutor on natural history.

"You shall have a lesson now from the book of nature," he used to say when we started. "It is a big book, and, if studied carefully, more knowledge can be gained from it than from any

other source. It might not be of so much use in the great cities down east, but I opine that you are not likely to spend much of your time in that direction, and it is well worth obtaining for many reasons, besides the satisfaction knowledge always affords."

We used to start with our rifles in our hands and our knapsacks on our backs, making our beds at night on a heap of leaves, the blue vault of heaven for our only covering; or, when the sky looked threatening, we either built a hut of boughs or occasionally took shelter in the log hut of one of the pioneers of civilisation, as the hardy backwoodsmen are called, although, in most instances, but little civilised themselves. We preferred, however, taking up our abode at night in a bower of our own construction.

We met with many adventures, but, owing to Mr Tidey's caution and judgment—though sometimes we were exposed to dangers—we always escaped from them without any serious mishap.

We had had several encounters with bears and wolves, and now and then we met with more formidable enemies in the shape of a party of Shawanees who had ventured back to their old hunting-ground in search of game, or in the hopes of stealing the sheep or hogs of some solitary settler.

Our tutor always spoke them fair and showed them that he was not afraid, and if we had any game, presented it to them as a mark of his friendship. When we came across an Indian trail we took good care to keep a bright look-out on every side and a strict watch at night, so as to prevent being surprised, lest the Indians might be tempted to murder us for the sake of obtaining our arms and ammunition, unable to resist the desire of possessing what to them would be a rich prize.

I must not stop to describe more minutely our adventures at that period, interesting as they were to us. I will however narrate the particulars of a curious incident which occurred during one of our excursions.

We had gone further west than usual, and were traversing a space of low-lying land through which a wide stream flowed onwards towards the Mississippi. We had expected to reach some higher ground where we could camp, when we found that the day was drawing to a close. We accordingly looked out for a dry spot, free from long grass, on which we could light our fire and spend the night. Some rocky ground just ahead, amid

which grew a number of small trees and bushes, promised to offer us the sort of place we were looking for.

We had just reached it, when I, happening to be a little in advance of our Dominie and Dan, saw a squirrel running along the ground towards a tree, with the evident intention of ascending it. We had already as much game as we required, so I refrained from firing. Just as the little creature had gained the foot of the tree, the ominous sound produced by the tail of a rattle-snake reached my ear, and the next instant an unusually large reptile of that species, darting forward, seized the innocent squirrel by the head, and began to draw it down its throat, the hind-legs of the little animal still convulsively moving.

I beckoned to Mr Tidey and Dan, who ran forward to witness the operation, in which I knew they would be much interested. Of course we could quickly have put an end to the snake, though we could not have saved its victim. The reptile had got half the body of the squirrel down its throat, when I saw the long grass close at hand violently agitated, and caught sight of a large black snake moving rapidly through it. The two creatures were well matched as to size. It was the evident intention of the black snake to attack the other. Instead of attempting to escape with its prize, the rattle-snake, though it could not use its venomous fangs, which would have given it an advantage over its opponent, whose teeth were unprovided with a poison-bag, advanced to the encounter. In an instant the two creatures had flown at each other, forming a writhing mass of apparently inextricable coils. In vain the rattle-snake attempted to get down the squirrel so as to use its fangs, the animal sticking in its throat could neither be swallowed nor ejected. The struggle was truly fearful to look at. Round and round they twisted and turned their lithe bodies. In the excitement of the moment we cheered on the combatants, who appeared perfectly heedless of our cries. By the most wonderful movements the rattle-snake managed to prevent the black snake from seizing its neck with its sharp teeth, or coiling its lithe tail round the other.

Had the rattle-snake succeeded in swallowing the little squirrel, one bite with its venomous fangs would have gained it the victory. For some time the result of the combat appeared indecisive. In point of size the two creatures were tolerably well matched, both being upwards of six or seven feet long, with bodies of about equal thickness, but they differed greatly in the shape of their heads, and still more so in the form of their tails, that of the black snake being round and tapering to a fine point,

while the thick rattle of the other was clearly discernible as they writhed and twisted round and round, its sound never ceasing while the deadly struggle continued; that and the angry hiss emitted by both alone broke the perfect silence which otherwise reigned around. At length the black snake succeeded in seizing the body of its antagonist at some distance from the head, when by a sudden whisk it encircled with its long tail the neck of the more venomous reptile. It then gradually drew the body of the latter within its coils until it had firmly secured its throat. In vain the rattle-snake attempted to free itself. At length, to our infinite satisfaction we saw the head of the venomous reptile drop towards the ground, and we no longer heard the rattle of its tail; still the black snake, which had from the first kept its sharp eyes intently fixed on those of the rattle-snake, did not appear satisfied that life was extinct, but held it in a fast embrace, carefully avoiding the risk of a puncture from its fangs.

"Hurrah!" shouted Dan when he saw the victory gained by the black snake. The reptile, the combat being now over, was startled by the sound of his voice. For an instant it looked at us with head erect, as if about to spring forward to the attack, when Dan, before Mr Tidey could stop him, lifted his rifle and fired. The big snake fell, and, after a few convulsive struggles, was dead beside its conquered foe.

"I wish that you had let the creature live," said Mr Tidey; "it would have done us no harm and deserved to go free; besides which it would probably have killed a number more rattlesnakes."

"Unless bitten itself," I remarked.

"It was too wary a creature and too rapid in its movements to be taken at a disadvantage," observed Mr Tidey. "It would have waited until it could catch another rattle-snake taking its dinner. However, as the creature is killed, we will examine it and see how it differs from the venomous reptile. To prevent the other from coming to life, we will make sure work by cutting off its head."

"Be careful," cried Dan, "I thought I saw its body move."

Taking his axe from his belt, our tutor, with one blow, severed the head from the body.

"Don't prick your finger with its sharp fangs," said Mr Tidey, "for, although the creature is dead, the poison may exude and perhaps produce death even now."

As he spoke he held up the head by the tail of the squirrel. The body of the little creature had begun to swell and filled the whole of the snake's mouth. Taking out a sharp knife and pressing the head of the snake with his axe, he cut open its jaws so as to expose both the upper and lower portions; by this means also he extracted the body of the squirrel. He then showed us its poison fangs, which, on removing the little animal, folded back into the upper jaw, on the sides of which they were placed. The points were as sharp and fine as needles. He then cut out from each side of the head, close to the root of the fangs, the venom-bags.

"You see that, to enable the head to contain these bags, it is very much broader than that of the harmless snake," he observed. "We shall find the same breadth of head in all the venomous species. The bags contain between them about eight drops of poison, one of which would be sufficient, introduced into the blood, to kill a man or a horse. You see round the base of each fang, a mass of muscular tissue. By its means the fang is elevated or depressed. When the snake opens its mouth to strike its victim, the depressing muscles are relaxed, and the opposite series become contracted, causing the fangs to rise up ready for action. Now look through my magnifying glass. You see that the fang is hollow from the base to the point, from the former the poison is pressed up out of the poison-bag and exudes through the fang point, which, as you see, is in the form of a narrow slit on its concave side."

"I don't see how any liquid could get through that," observed Dan.

"It does though, and quite sufficient comes through to produce a deadly effect. The other teeth enable the serpent to hold its prey, but are not in communication with the poison-bags. I'll now show you the poison, but we must be very cautious how we handle it," observed the Dominie.

On this he cut open the poison-bags and exhibited a small amount of pale-yellow oil-like substance. He afterwards cleaned his knife carefully, and observed, "So potent is the venom, that even should a small drop remain, and were I to cut my finger, after the lapse of many days, I might fatally poison my blood. And now, to prevent any accident, we will bury the poison-bags and fangs, where they are not likely to do any harm," he added.



Having dug a hole with his axe, he did as he proposed, covering it up with leaves.

"And now we will have an examination of the creature's tail, in which it differs from all other reptiles."

Having cut it off, he held it up, and counted the joints, of which the snake—one of the largest of its species—had twenty. Cutting them apart he showed us how the apparatus was arranged. I could best describe it by saying it looked as if a number of small cups were placed one within the other, flattened on both sides, with rings round the edges and slightly decreasing in size towards the end, the last joint being the smallest and forming a knob. These cups are horny and loosely joined, so as to produce the rattling sound for which the creature is noted. Every year of its life a new joint is supposed to be added, so that the reptile killed by the black snake, must have been twenty years old. Each joint was in form somewhat like the tip end of my thumb. I have often since seen rattlesnakes, though seldom one so large. Generally I have found them coiled up among the dry herbage, with the tip of the tail raised in the centre of the coil. On seeing me approach the creatures have instantly produced a quivering movement of their tails, which made the joints of the rattle shake against each other. I cannot find expressions to describe the sound, but having once heard it I never failed to approach with caution, or to keep out of the creatures' way.

"We will now have a look at the blue or black snake, or, as it is called here, 'the Racer,'" observed the Dominie, "and a 'racer' it is rightly called, for it moves along, as we saw this one do through the grass, at the speed of lightning. When I first saw one I fancied from the noise that it made rushing through the dried grass, that it was a rattle-snake and shot the creature before I discovered that it was of a non-venomous species. It can, however, bite very severely with its sharp teeth, and I once saw a poor man almost frightened to death, believing that he had been bitten by a rattle-snake. You see that the head is supplied with a formidable array of teeth, but its tail is much longer and finer than that of the rattle-snake. It can, however, open its jaws wide enough to gulp down a good-sized bird. It gains its name of the blue or black snake from the colour of its back, which is, as you see, blue-black; while the underside is of an ashen slate hue. The tints vary slightly, and hence the two names. Its tail is fine in the extreme, and enables it to steer its rapid course through the herbage."

We let our Dominie run on, though we were well acquainted with the black snake, for several had at different times come to the farm in search of rats, of which they kill a vast number. My father gave orders that they should not be molested; after remaining, however, for some time, they invariably took their departure, for, as it may be supposed, it is impossible to detain them against their will, as they can climb over high palings or walls and insinuate their bodies into very small holes.

The battle and the lecture occupied some time, when we had to hurry in order to get our camp ready for the night. Our first care was to cut a sufficient supply of fire-wood to keep up a good blaze during the night, and as the air in that low situation was somewhat damp, Mr Tidey advised that we should build a hut, which would serve the double purpose of sheltering us from the heavy mist, as well as afford a protection from any wild beasts which might be prowling about. We had killed a couple of turkeys, and as soon as we had got a good pile of hot embers we stuck up our game to roast, Dan having plucked them while I formed the uprights and spits, and Mr Tidey was engaged in erecting the hut. The odour from the roasting turkeys filled the air and was wafted by a light breeze into the recesses of the forest. Preparations for the night were made. We had taken our seats before the fire, with one of the turkeys already placed on a large leaf, which served as a dish, when a rustling sound, accompanied by that of the breaking of branches, reached our ears. Dan and I started to our feet.

"Stay quiet!" whispered Mr Tidey, lifting his rifle which lay by his side: "we will see what will happen, no red-skins make those sounds, they would approach far more cautiously." The sound of the snapping of the branches and underwood increased, and presently we saw a shaggy creature, which, by the light of the fire thrown upon it, we immediately recognised as a huge bear.

"What a monster!" cried Dan; "let me shoot it."

"No, no, you might miss; the creature would become dangerous if wounded," answered the Dominie.

We all three were at this time kneeling down with our rifles ready for action. The bear advanced cautiously, sniffing up the odours of the roast turkey, but not liking the glare in his eyes.

"Don't either of you fire until I tell you," whispered our tutor.

The next instant the bear, one of the brown species, raised itself on its hind-legs to look round. The Dominie pulled his trigger.

So well aimed was his shot, that "bruin" rolled over, giving a few kicks with his thick legs.

"Stay, boys; don't go near his head until you're sure that he is dead," cried the Dominie, who was always very careful of us; and advancing axe in hand, he dealt the prostrate bear a blow, which effectually knocked any life it might have retained out of it.

"It's a pity we are not nearer home, or we might take the skin with us as a trophy," I observed.

"Oh, I'll carry it!" cried Dan, "provided that I have not to take the head."

"I'll help you," said I.

"And I'll relieve you when you get tired," observed the Dominie. "At all events we will have some bear-steaks for breakfast as a change from turkeys."

That bear, though easily gained, cost us a sleepless night. We had eaten our supper and had just thrown ourselves on our leafy couches, when a low howl was heard, followed by several yelps.

"Those are wolves!" cried Mr Tidey, starting up; "they'll eat the bear and then eat us, if we don't drive them off."

"They sha'n't have the bear!" cried Dan; "let's drag him up to the fire and fight over his body."

"It would be more prudent to skin him and cut off the steaks we may require," said the Dominie: "we will then drag the body to a distance and allow the wolves to fight over it, so that we can pick them off at our leisure or drive the survivors away when they have done their feast." Shouting and waving brands in our hands we drove the hungry pack to a distance, where they sat down howling with rage and disappointment while we, by the bright flames of the fire, succeeded in skinning the bear and cutting off the tit-bits; we then, as proposed, dragged the carcass to the borders of the forest-glade in which we were encamped, and returned to our fire with the skin and meat. No sooner had the flames produced by some fresh wood thrown on the fire decreased, than the howling pack drew near the carcass. Concealing ourselves behind our hut, we waited to watch what would next take place. It was evident that the brutes were still wary of the fire, for they approached

cautiously: at last one bolder or more hungry than the rest, rushed forward and commenced gnawing at the carcase. His example was followed by his companions. We counted upwards of thirty of the savage creatures, a formidable pack had we been without arms, or a fire, but they caused us no anxiety about our safety. "Now, boys, wait until I give the word, and we'll fire together," whispered our Dominie. "I'll take the one to the right; and you, Mike, take a fellow in the centre; and you, Dan, knock over a third to the left. We may exterminate the whole pack, if we take good aim, as the survivors are sure to kill their wounded companions. Now, fire!"

Dan and I did as he desired, and three wolves rolled over. Notwithstanding this the greater part of the pack were too eager in devouring the bear to take much notice of what had occurred. A few, apparently young wolves, who stood at a distance, howling and yelping, afraid to approach while the elders were enjoying their feast, ran back alarmed at the shots. They, however, quickly returned. We immediately reloaded, and at another signal from Mr Tidey again fired. Two more wolves were killed, but Dan only slightly wounded an animal, which went howling away, creating a panic among the outsiders. The rest, still regardless of the death of so many of their number, continued gnawing away at the bear, snarling and yelping, and wrangling over their feast.

The third time we fired, with the same success as at first.

"We may let them alone for the present until they have eaten up the bear, as there is no chance of their molesting us," observed Mr Tidey; "and we shall expend too much of our ammunition, if we attempt to kill the whole pack. Let us make up the fire and they will not venture near us."

Although the flames burnt up brightly, the wolves did not appear to be scared by them, but continued as before tearing the carcase to pieces, presenting a surging mass of heads, tails, and bodies twisting and turning and struggling together, while they kept up an incessant chorus of snarls and yelps. The Dominie proposed that we should lie down while he kept watch.

"No, no, we will take it by turns to do that," I observed; "let us draw lots who shall take the first watch; we shall all of us then obtain some sleep and be ready to proceed in the morning."

My proposal was agreed to, three pieces of stick served our purpose held in Dan's hand. I drew the longest and had the first watch, promising to call the Dominie in a couple of hours. I took

good care to keep up a blazing fire, while I paced backwards and forwards, between it and the hut. I had no fear of falling asleep, while the uproar continued, though scarcely had Dan stretched himself on the ground, than his eyes closed, while the snores which proceeded from the spot where the Dominie had thrown himself assured me that he too was in the land of dreams.

As the "patriarchs" of the pack had somewhat appeased their hunger, the younger members rushed, in uttering sharp yelps, to which the elders replied with still louder snarls, greatly increasing the horrible din. The Dominie and Dan started up, fancying that the wolves were upon us. Neither of them could after this go to sleep.

"Come, Mike, I'll take your place," said Mr Tidey. This I declined, for I knew it would be useless to lie down. We therefore all three sat round the fire, hoping that the wolves would at length leave us quiet. The savage brutes, however, having finished the bear began to tear up the bodies of their companions, wrangling over them as they had done over that of bruin.

At last the Dominie, losing patience, jumped up exclaiming, "We must drive these brutes off, though they are not worth any more of our powder and shot."

Each of us taking a burning brand, we advanced towards the wolves, and, waving our torches, raised a loud shout. The brutes hearing the noise and seeing us coming, took to flight, disappearing in the depths of the forest. Where the body of the bear had been, part of the skull, and a few of the larger bones alone remained, while most of the wolves had also been torn to pieces and the whole ground round was strewn with the fragments and moist with gore. Disgusted by the sight, we hurried back to our camp.

"We shall get some rest now, I hope, for I don't think the wolves will come near us," said Dan.

"Not so sure about that," observed the Dominie; "however, we will try and obtain some sleep."

Before our eyes were closed the horrible chorus of howls and yelps and barking recommenced, and continued apparently on every side of our camp; still, while the fire burned brightly, there was no fear of the brutes rushing in on us. To sleep, while those dismal howls broke the stillness of night, was simply

impossible. Now the creatures appeared to be coming nearer, now they retreated, now they seemed on this side, now on that; their voices had summoned a fresh pack, who, rushing in, quickly devoured the remainder of the feast. All night long the tumult was kept up. Occasionally Mr Tidey or I rose to attend to the fire. Upon each occasion I caught sight of numerous glaring eyes staring out at us from amid the darkness. As morning approached the sounds gradually ceased, and we had the satisfaction of believing that the wolves had retreated to the recesses of the forest. I immediately fell asleep, and when Mr Tidey roused Dan and me, the sun was already several degrees above the horizon. We breakfasted on some bear-steak, which we had fortunately secured, then set to work to scrape the skin and to pack it up in a tight compass. As we had no wish to carry the skin further than we could help, we put about and steered a course for home, which we calculated it would take us four days to reach. Nothing occurred worth narrating for the next three days.

We had still a march of about twenty-five miles to accomplish, and were looking for a convenient spot to camp in near a stream bordered by a wood, when we heard a low moan, which seemed to proceed from no great distance off.

"That's a human voice," observed Mr Tidey; "some poor fellow wounded by the Indians, or who perhaps has been injured by some other means."

We hunted about, being still uncertain of the exact spot whence the sound proceeded. Again a moan reached our ears, and guided by it we hurried on, when behind a bush we found stretched on the ground, apparently at the last gasp, a negro dressed in the usual costume of the slaves, a rough shirt and loose trousers. His feet were cut and bleeding, probably from the sharp rocks and prickly bushes among which he had passed. He opened his languid eyes as the sound of our footsteps reached his ears, and pointing to his mouth murmured—

"Eat, eat,—massa, eat."

Having fortunately the remains of our last dinner in our knapsacks, we were at once able to give him some food, while Mr Tidey poured some rum and water down his throat. The effect was most satisfactory. In a few minutes he was able to sit up, when he gazed at us earnestly.

"Where were you wanting to go, my poor fellow?" asked the Dominie in a kind tone.

The black's eye brightened.

"Oh, massa, you kind to poor nigger," he said in a weak voice.

"White man or nigger, we are all of the same stock, whatever the philosophers may say to the contrary. I won't ask where you came from, except you wish to tell us; but perhaps we can help you on your way if you have friends you desire to reach."

I don't think the black quite understood the Dominie's remarks, but he comprehended enough to know that they were dictated by a kind spirit and that he might trust us.

"You no gib up de poor slave to his hard massa?" he said in a whisper, his voice trembling as if he was divulging a secret on which his life depended.

"No, that I'll not," said the Dominie; "I don't hold with those who think they have a right to buy and sell their fellow-creatures, and in my opinion those fellow-creatures are perfectly justified in endeavouring to get away from them, though if I was to say so down east, I might chance to be the victim of 'Lynch law.'"

The countenance of the negro brightened still more.

"Dis nigger go whar you go, massa," he said, attempting to rise. His strength, however, was insufficient for the exertion, and he sank back to the ground.

"You are not able to journey yet, and it will take you two or three days to regain your strength," observed the Dominie; "so we will camp here, boys, and as we are not expected home for a day or two, it will be no great loss to us. We have light enough yet to shoot our suppers, and I heard a turkey 'gobble' not far off. You stay by the black man, collect wood for a fire and boughs for a shanty, while I go and try my luck."

Saying this, our kind-hearted tutor took his rifle and soon disappeared in the forest. We, in the meantime, were too much occupied in obeying his directions to put any further questions to the negro, whose eyes, however, were turned towards us as we moved about. We had soon collected sufficient fuel to last us during the night, and then employed ourselves in cutting down some young trees and lopping off some boughs. While thus engaged we heard two shots. A short time afterwards the Dominie appeared, carrying a turkey in one hand and a small fawn over his shoulder.

"We've food here, boys, for ourselves and enough to set the negro on his legs again," he exclaimed as he approached us. "Well done, I see you haven't been idle; now kindle the fire while I fix up the shanty. I should like to get our poor friend here under cover as soon as possible, for more reasons than one, and he'll be the better for a mug of soup."

The Dominie, among other articles, had carried, I should have said, a small saucepan, which had served to fetch water, boil our tea, and was equally applicable for making a small quantity of soup. While I made up the fire, Dan, having filled the saucepan from the stream, plucked the turkey and cut up a part of it into small pieces. We then put it on to boil. The Dominie in the meantime had flayed the deer and spitted a couple of joints to roast, together with the remainder of the bird. This done, he finished the shanty, into which we lifted the black, and placed him on a bed of small twigs and leaves, a far more comfortable couch than from his appearance we suspected he had enjoyed for a long time. His looks, more than his words, expressed his gratitude, though he continued to murmur—

"Tankee, tankee, massa; God bless massa!" his vocabulary not enabling him to use any set phrases.

It was dark before the soup was ready. As soon as it was sufficiently cool, and I had added some pepper and salt, I took it to him.

"Oh, massa! dis too much good to poor nigger," he murmured as he supped it up; and almost immediately afterwards sinking back, he fell into a deep slumber.

"I don't care whether the black is a runaway slave or not, but I tell you what, boys, we must be cautious how we proceed with him, the chances are that he is pursued," said the Dominie as we were seated before the fire eating our ample supper. "If so, the fellows who come after him are likely to treat us with scant courtesy."

"I'm sure my father would wish to help the black, if he is a runaway slave, for he hates the system of slavery as much as any man," observed Dan.

"I tell you what we must do, then," continued the Dominie, "if any strangers appear, we must keep him inside the hut and cover him up with boughs and leaves. They will scarcely suspect he is with us, and you must leave me to answer any questions they put to us."



"Suppose they have blood-hounds with them, the brutes are sure to scent him out."

"If we see the dogs approaching, we must shoot them without ceremony, and take our chances of the consequences. I am only supposing what may not happen, but we must be prepared for contingencies."

As on other nights, we kept watch, giving Dan a short one, the Dominie and I taking the longest. Our object, however, was to scare away wolves or bears, for no human enemies were likely to approach us during the night.

We got up as soon as it was daylight, but the black did not awake until the sun rose and we had finished our breakfast. We gave him some more soup, which suited him better than our own fare, but it was evident that he was still too weak to move.

"The chances are that he remains in this state several days, and your mother will become alarmed if you do not make your appearance," said the Dominie. "You know your way home as well as I do, and I wish that you would set off alone, while I remain with the black. State what has happened, and perhaps your father will think fit to send the waggon to bring us in."

As there appeared no objection to this proposal, Dan and I agreed to start immediately. Tears came into the eyes of the negro when we went into the hut to wish him good-bye.

"Oh, massa, you like angel from heaven, so good to poor black fellow," he exclaimed.

We had a pretty long day's march before us, for although on a beaten road the distance would have been nothing, we had to make our way through forests and across streams and bogs, some pretty rough hills to climb, and valleys to pass. We carried a portion of the venison with us, which was still uncooked, and felt sure that without going out of our way we should be able to kill something or other to serve us for supper should we not reach home in time. At first we had some difficulty in making our way, and without great care we knew that we might be steering too far to the right or left. Every mile we advanced the country became more and more familiar. At noon we camped, lighted a fire, and cooked the venison. We calculated that by this time we had done about twelve miles, so Dan thought, but I was not quite sure of that. There was no means of ascertaining which was right. "At all events, we must not spend much time here," I exclaimed, as we finished the last of our

venison, and jumping up I buckled on my knapsack, and took my rifle in my hand. Dan was in no hurry to start. Seeing that I was determined to go, he got up, and we trudged on together at the same speed as before. We had not got far when, as we reached the brow of a hill, we caught sight of two men on horseback passing along the valley at our feet. We instinctively drew back, hoping that we had not been seen, but their voices reached our ears hailing us.

"Hulloa! youngsters, have you seen a nigger-boy running in this direction?" asked one of the men as we drew near.

"We have seen no nigger-boy running in this direction," I replied, such being the fact.

"If you do, just take him along with you, and threaten to shoot him if he won't move; don't do it though, for he's worth a heap of dollars, and if you don't catch him, some one else will."

"It's not our business to catch runaway slaves," Dan answered unwisely.

"Whew! my young cock sparrow, to whom do you belong?" asked the man, squirting a stream of tobacco juice out of his mouth, which Dan narrowly escaped.

"We belong to our father," answered Dan, "and to no one else."

"And who is your father, master cock-a-hoop?" asked the man.

"Call me by my proper name and I'll answer a civil question."

"You'll answer whether I put the question civilly or not," cried the fellow, raising his whip and spurring his horse on towards Dan, on which I brought my rifle to bear on the man, exclaiming—

"If you touch my brother, I'll shoot you, as sure as you're a living man."

On this he pulled in his rein, while his companion, bursting into a loud laugh, exclaimed—

"These young cocks crow loudly! I say, youngsters, who is your father? he must be a smart fellow to own such a pair of bantlings."

"Our father is Captain Loraine who lives at Uphill, and he's not the person to stand nonsense from you or any other man like you!" exclaimed Dan, whose Irish temper had risen almost to boiling pitch.

The strangers, seeing that they could not get much change out of us, rode on; the last man who had spoken bantering his companion on their defeat. I saw the other turn his head several times as though not quite sure that we should not fire after him.

"I am glad they didn't come upon our camp this morning, although as they have no blood-hounds with them, we might have managed to conceal the negro without having had resort to force," I remarked.

"But we should have had to tell lies if they had put questions to us, or have given him up or fought for him," observed Dan.

"Still better reason why we should be thankful that they did not find us," I answered.

We were so excited by what had occurred that we slackened our speed for a considerable way. We were still several miles from home when night overtook us; we had therefore again to camp out. We did not mind this, but we were anxious to get to the farm, to send assistance to our tutor and the poor black. According to our usual plan, we built a shanty, lighted a fire, and one of us sat up to keep the latter blazing. We heard strange sounds during the night, which kept us wakeful, and during my watch I caught sight of a bear, though the fire made him keep at a respectful distance. After surveying us for a few minutes, and not discovering any tempting odour, he slunk away, convinced that he would gain nothing by paying us a visit. When I roused up Dan, I told him to keep a look-out, lest bruin should come back, and lay down to snatch a short sleep, expecting to be roused up again before long. Dan, however, saw nothing during his watch to induce him to call me, so I had my sleep out. I was awakened by feeling him shaking my shoulder.

"It is near morning, Mike, I think," he said; "I suspect that I must have nodded, for the fire is lower than it should be, but I have thrown on some sticks and it will soon be blazing up again."

I sprang to my feet just in time to see a big shaggy beast emerging from the surrounding darkness. I gave a poke to the

fire with my foot, it made some dry leaves burst into a flame, and then Dan and I both shouted at the top of our voices. The bear, who had again scented us out, might in another instant have caught Dan or me in his unfriendly embrace; but he stopped short, and then, turning round, retreated much faster than he had come. We did not fire, as we should probably only have wounded him and have excited him to rage.

Soon after this daylight broke. Having eaten the remainder of our provisions, we started off, hoping to reach home in three or four hours. We met with no other adventures by the way. The first person we saw on approaching our home was our father. We told him of our discovery of the apparently dying black, and that the dominie had remained behind to take care of the poor fellow.

"Mr Tidey has done as I would have had him, and acted the part of the good Samaritan. We'll send the waggon off at once, to bring him and the negro in," said my father.

Though I wanted to go too, our father declared that we looked so much knocked up from our long tramp and sleepless nights, that we must turn in and get some rest, and he said that he would despatch Peter, who knew the country better than we did, for the purpose.

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### **Chapter Three.**

**Arrival of the waggon—Why Dio ran away—How to act for the best—Abolition of slavery—What Biddy O'Toole meant to do—Kathleen and Dio—Biddy's interview with the strangers—Dio's pursuers—A fortunate arrival—Teaching the black to read—Good words—An interrupted lesson—The alarm—Man-hunters—Every man's house his castle—Watching the strangers—An agreeable surprise—Mr McDermont—My mother's apprehensions of danger—Our garrison increased.**

The first thing I did the next morning on getting up was to hurry out to ascertain if Mr Tidey and the negro had arrived, and was much disappointed to find that the waggon had not come back. Breakfast was over, and still it did not appear. My mother suggested that possibly the black was too weak to be removed. When I told my father of the two men we had fallen in with, in search of a runaway slave, he looked grave, remarking—

"Possibly the fellows on their return may have fallen in with the waggon, and if so, they have carried off it and its occupants."

"I don't think Mr Tidey would allow himself to be captured by only two men, or would surrender the black of whom he had taken charge," I remarked.

"He is not likely to submit himself to be made prisoner, I grant, unless he should have been wounded, but possibly he may not have felt himself called on to fight for a stranger, should the men in search of the slave be able to prove that he belongs to them or their employer," answered my father. "However, I'll set out to try to ascertain what has happened; saddle Swiftsure, Mike, while I get ready."

As I was on my way to the field in which our horses grazed, I heard Dan shout out—

"Here comes the waggon, no necessity to get the horses."

On running back to the hill on which Dan was standing, I saw the waggon coming along, driven at a quick rate by Peter, while Mr Tidey was seated with his rifle between his knees, close behind him. I could not discover a third person, and I began to fear that the negro had died or been captured by his pursuers. This was a great disappointment, and I pictured to myself the misery of the poor fellow, should he have been dragged back into slavery.

While returning by a path running alongside the hill, we lost sight of the waggon. On our arrival at the house, however, it had just reached the foot of the hill. We here found our father, mother, and Kathleen, standing at the doorway to welcome Mr Tidey, and to hear what had happened.

At that moment a person rose from the bottom of the waggon, and, leaping to the ground, came running towards us. It was the black we had discovered. For an instant he stopped and gazed in my father's face, then darting forward, he seized his hand and pressed it to his lips, exclaiming—

"Oh, massa! dis niggar Dio know you; nebber forget you, massa; you remember de poor slave niggar who pulled de little boy out of de water?"

"Remember you, my good fellow!" exclaimed my father, wringing his hand. "I have never forgotten you; you saved my

boy's life, and probably my wife's too. There they both stand, though you don't perhaps remember them."

Dio gazed at my mother, then at Dan and me.

"De lady, yes! remember her," and he made an obeisance to my mother. "But de little boy him not know which," and he looked first at me then at Dan.

"That's the one," said my father, pointing to me, "he has grown considerably since then, but he has not forgotten you."

"No indeed I have not," I said, "and now I know who you are, I'm doubly thankful that we fell in with you."

"Ah, massa, dis niggar gone coon if you hadn't found him," answered Dio.

"I'm very glad that they did find you, Dio; but how did you happen to be in such a condition?" asked my father.

The negro fixed his eyes on my father's countenance—

"Massa, me tell you de tru's. Dat cruel man, Bracher, him make de poor niggar's back sore wid de lash, and den, when he find I lub one darkey girl, him beat her too and den sell her for fifty dollars, 'cos she almost dead. It almost break her heart, and her jump into de riber and drown herself. Den Dio tink if him stay him shoot Masser Bracher, so him run 'way and say him find de good cap'n, de only white man who eber say one kind word to poor Dio. Him wander in de wood, and at last, when he hab noting to eat, him sink down and tink him die. Den come de tall doctor and de young gentleman, dey put new life into dis niggar. Ah! massa, let Dio stay here, him ready to be always your slave, an' nebber, nebber want run 'way."

"Though I cannot let you be my slave, I will gladly protect you and allow you to remain here until you have sufficiently recovered to make your way northward into Canada, where alone you can be safe," said my father.

"Dis niggar wish always to be de cap'n's slave, no want to go to Canada," answered Dio.

"But, my poor fellow, if you remain here, you will be recaptured to a certainty, as your former master would find you out before long, and would place men on the watch to seize you out of doors, even though I might protect you in the house."

Still Dio entreated that even when he had recovered his strength he should not be sent away; but my father was firm in declining to make any promise both on his own account and for the sake of the black himself. It was in fact an illegal act to assist a slave in escaping, and much more to harbour one, and my father knew full well that possibly a party of Kentuckian slaveholders would come across and capture Dio. The black, although much recovered, was still somewhat weak. My father seeing this, and considering that it would be imprudent to allow him to sleep in the huts with the other negroes, ordered a small inner room to be prepared for him where he could remain in tolerable security even should any of those in search of him come our way. Peter was charged to be cautious not to mention that he had brought Dio to the house, while fortunately none of the other farm hands, (as far as we knew), had seen him arrive. Mr Tidey was fully alive to the importance of keeping the matter secret, and was as anxious as any of us to prevent the fugitive being retaken. The negro himself seemed perfectly satisfied that he was safe from capture now that he was with us.

My father's intention was, as soon as he had recovered, to supply him with a suit of clothes and some money, and to carry him off during the night northward. He was then to make his way through Indiana to Ohio, whence he could cross Lake Erie into Canada. My father was acquainted with a quaker family residing not much more than a hundred miles from us in the former state on the Wabash, and they were sure to be ready to assist him on his journey by forwarding him on to other friends who held their principles. At that time what was called "the underground railway" was not regularly established, but there were a large number of persons in the northern states, including all the members of the Society of Friends, who objected to slavery as much as my father did, and were always ready to assist fugitives running away from their cruel taskmasters. The movement in England in favour of the abolition of the slave-trade had been commenced by Wilberforce in 1787. From that time the British emancipists gained strength, and in 1792 resolutions for the abolition of the slave-trade were carried in the House of Commons. The following year, however, the House did not confirm its former vote, and though Wilberforce annually brought forward a motion, for seven years it was regularly lost until in 1799 a bill was carried limiting the traffic to a certain extent of coast. It was not, however, until 1807 that a bill for the total abolition of the British slave-trade received the royal assent. At first a penalty in money was alone inflicted on British subjects captured on board slave-ships, but in 1811 an act carried by Lord Brougham made slave-dealing felony. This being

found an inadequate check, in 1824 the slave-trade was declared to be piracy and the punishment death. This was enforced until 1837, when the punishment for trading in slaves was changed to transportation for life. Other nations imitated England in prohibiting their subjects from trafficking in slaves; the United States of North America and Brazil making the traffic piracy, and punishable with death. All, with one exception, the United States, agreed to permit their ships to be searched at sea by the vessels of other nations. Unhappily, however, the profits on the trade were so enormous, that the traffic in slaves continued to be carried on from the coast of Africa to the Brazils, Cuba, and the more southern of the United States in spite of the activity of the British cruisers. Of course it will be understood that there is a wide distinction between the abolition of the slave-trade, and the abolition of slavery. Great Britain abolished slavery in her colonies in 1833, at the same time slavery existed, with all its abominations, in the more southern of the United States, as well as in the Brazils and Cuba, and on the other side of the continent. At the time of which I am speaking negroes were bought and sold and driven from one state to another. Parents were separated from their children, husbands from their wives, and if any one was daring enough to speak a word in favour of the much-suffering race, he ran the risk of having his house fired, and his plantations devastated, or of being put to death, as John Brown was in subsequent years.

My father was well aware of the danger he ran in harbouring Dio. Under ordinary circumstances he would have hazarded much to save a slave from being recaptured, but he felt himself doubly bound to preserve our negro guest, and thus repay in the most effectual manner, the debt of gratitude he owed to him for saving my mother's life and mine.

The fact of his being in the house was kept a profound secret from all the outdoor servants, and my father knew that he could trust Peter and Black Rose, who were the only persons in the family, besides ourselves, including Mr Tidey and our Irish servant Biddy O'Toole. The latter was cautioned not to speak about a negro being in the house, should any strangers come to look for him.

"Arrah! thim spalpeens w'd be mighty claver to get onything out of Biddy O'Toole," she answered, with a curl of her lips and cock of her nose, while her eyes twinkled; "sure if they force themselves into the house while the master is away, I'll bid them dare to disturb my old mither, whose troubled with a



fever. If they come near the room, I'll give them a taste of the broomstick."

A couple of days had passed away, and we began to hope that Dio's pursuers had given up the search, and would not suspect where he was concealed. He was rapidly recovering under the kind treatment he received, for he had never before in his life been so well tended. Either Dan, Kathleen, or I took him in his food, and Peter slept in the same room and looked after him at night, but of course in the day-time had to attend to his usual duties. Kathleen became Dio's special favourite. I am sure from the way he spoke of her, he would have died to do her a service.

"She one angel, Massa Mike. If such as she lib in heaven, it mus' be one beautiful place," he remarked to me one day.

Kathleen would sit patiently by his bedside, and sing to him with her sweet child-voice, and then read a little or tell him a story, handing him some cooling drink when he was thirsty.

I had one day, while chopping wood, severely sprained my right wrist. My mother had bound it up and put my arm a sling, so that I could not use it, and I therefore remained at home while my father and Dan were out. The only persons in the house besides my mother, Kathleen, and myself, being Bidy and Dio. Rose had gone to assist the wife of a settler at some distance whose child was ill. I had been kept awake by the pain my wrist caused me during the night, and while attempting to read had fallen asleep, when I was aroused by the sound of the rough voices of two men at the front door demanding admittance, and abusing Bidy in no measured terms for refusing to let them in.

"It'd be mighty curious, now, if I'd be afther lettin' strangers into the house while the cap'n is away," answered Bidy, who had evidently seen them coming, and had confronted them on the threshold; "in here you don't put your feet 'till the masther comes home to give ye lave, an' unless yez keep more civil tongues in your head that'll not be likely."

"Are you the only person in the house?" asked one of the men.

"An' what if I am the only person? I am as good as a dozen such spalpeens as you!" cried Bidy in high tones.

"You've got as good as a dozen tongues in your head, you saucy jade," answered one of the men, with a laugh.

"Saucy or not saucy, you don't come in here. I'm left in charge, with the mistress busy in one room an' my ould mither, who came all the way out from Ireland when I was a slip of a girl, sick in bed in another, so I'll ax you not to spake so loudly, or you'll be afther disturbing them. Now just sit down on the bank outside 'till the cap'n comes, or mount your horses and ride away about your business."

"Come, come, Mistress Sharptongue, whether the cap'n shows himself or not, we intend to look round the house inside and out. We are hunting for a runaway nigger, and we understand that Captain Loraine has a black boy, and if he is not the one we are looking for, he's pretty sure to know where the other is. These free niggers ought to be hung up on the nearest trees wherever they are to be found; they are a pest to the country!"

"Sure is it Pater ye mane!" exclaimed Biddy in an indignant tone; "nigger though he may be, he is more honest than many a white man."

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, Misess Impudence or it may be the worse for you," said one of the men.

Biddy gave a scornful laugh.

"I'll be after t'aching you to keep a civil tongue in your head; just do as I tell you, or—"

I could suppose Biddy flourishing her broomstick. The men laughed in return, and then, hearing a scuffle, fearing that she might be ill-treated, I thought it time to make my appearance with my gun in my left hand, though it would have cost me much had it been necessary to pull the trigger. Biddy was standing at bay, defending herself bravely against the two men, who were endeavouring to force their way into the hall, where the scene I am describing took place.

Whack, whack! down came Biddy's stick on their arms, which they held up to defend their heads, when one of the fellows, who had received a harder blow than he liked, seized the stick with one hand, while with the other he drew his bowie-knife and pointed it at the girl, as if about to strike.

"Arrah! now, ye coward, would ye be afther usin' your knife on a woman?" shrieked Biddy.

Fearing that the man would not hesitate to commit some act of violence, I stepped forward, and, showing my gun, shouted,

"Back, you villains, whoever you are, or take the consequences. I have overheard what you have said; the girl is doing her duty, and until my father comes back—and I expect him every minute—into this house you do not enter."

The men, who had hitherto not seen me, observing my gun pointed at their heads, stepped back a pace or two; when Biddy, taking advantage of their eyes being withdrawn from her, struck the bowie-knife out of the hand of the man who had attacked her, crying out—

"Fire, Mr Mike, fire; an' we shall, gain the day!"

The two men, who evidently had no wish to risk their lives in the task they had undertaken, sprang back together through the doorway to avoid the expected shot, when Biddy, darting after them, slammed the door in their faces, instantly slipping the bolt, so that they could not again force it open, though they made the attempt. As she did so she uttered a shout of triumph.

"Arrah! the spalpeens will not be again trying to walk into the houses of dacent people with a cock an' bull story about hunting for a runaway slave. Just let them have a taste of your rifle, and they'll not forget the lesson we ye given them."

This she said at the top of her voice, knowing that the men outside would hear her. Whether or not they would have made another attempt to get in I cannot say, for at that moment, looking out from the window of the room at which I had been seated, I caught sight of my father, Mr Tidey, and Dan, with guns in hand, approaching the house.

I immediately cried out to them that some men had been endeavouring to force their way into the house. The brave Biddy's assailants hearing what I said, and expecting probably to have some shot sent after them, took to their heels until they reached their horses, which they had left secured to some trees, when mounting, they galloped off as hard as they could go. Biddy, the excitement over, went into hysterics, laughing and crying and shouting out—

"We've won the day! We did it well, didn't we, Master Mike?"

My father and Mr Tidey, on hearing the account I gave them, were of opinion that the men were satisfied that the black was not concealed in the house, but that Biddy had simply fought to prevent them from entering. Probably they admired her all the

more for her determined conduct. Dan, keeping himself concealed, followed them for some distance, and when he came back reported that they had taken the road to Kentucky, so we hoped that we should be rid of them.

Several days passed away and Dio had recovered his strength sufficiently to get up and move about the house, though my father would not allow him to go out of doors. His delight was to attend to Kathleen and do her bidding. She, finding her power, kept him in constant employment. Young as she was, she could read remarkably well, and her great desire was to teach him to read. He probably had never before seen a book, as any person attempting to teach the blacks in the slave-states would have been thrown into prison, and very possibly hung to the nearest tree. Except ledgers and account books, probably not a volume of any description was to be found in Mr Bracher's establishment. For hours together Kathleen would occupy a high chair, with Dio seated on the ground by her side, while she taught him the alphabet or read to him some interesting tale out of one of her books. My mother felt it her duty to instruct him in the gospel, of which he was perfectly ignorant, and she took great pains to impart to him its elementary truths, which he willingly and joyfully took in.

"Dis poor niggas nebber 'fore heard Jesus Christ," he said to her one day in a low voice; "Him wond'ful good for die for black man like me who nebber do noting to please Him. Me try an' lub Him an' serve Him with all my heart to de end ob my days."

"Christ died for black men and white men alike; God wants all people of every colour, nation, and tongue to come to Him and to be saved," answered my mother. "If Dio gives God his heart, God will protect him and guide him through life until He calls him to that happy heaven He has prepared for all those who love Him here on earth."

When Dio heard that the Bible contained God's loving message to man, he became doubly anxious to learn to read it. It was wonderful the progress he made in a short time, showing that the minds of the negro race are as capable of imbibing knowledge as those of white men.

There was still a considerable risk that Dio might be recognised by some of the friends of Mr Bracher who might pass that way, and my father had determined to start with him in a few days on his projected journey northwards.

My father and I had just returned from a distant part of the estate, and were about to enter the house, when, looking along the road, I saw three horsemen, two of whom bore a striking resemblance to the men who had paid us a visit when in search of Dio.

"They may be mere travellers, or may be coming without any thought of Dio, but it will be prudent, in case of accident, to be prepared for them," observed my father; "we will go in and stow away the black."

We entered as we spoke. Kathleen had taken her usual place on a chair with a book in her hand while several others lay scattered before her. Dio was seated on the ground, his eyes level with the page from which she read, he endeavouring to repeat the words after her. Biddy was engaged at the other end of the room in making a cake, and did not observe us enter. My father, afraid of alarming the little girl, did not speak, but beckoned Dio who just then looked up, to come to him. Biddy, seeing that something was amiss, hurried out of the room after us.

"Not a moment to lose," he whispered, "run back to your room, jump into bed, and draw the clothes over your head; take care that nothing belonging to you is left in sight. Mike will carry away your shoes and anything else you have. Some suspicious persons are coming this way."

"I should not be surprised, Biddy, if they are your old friends," I observed; "you will treat them with due hospitality if they enter the house."

"Sure the cap'n won't be lettin' thim in at all at all," she said, when she observed the three men on horseback approaching, two of whom she recognised as her former opponents.

"Biddy is right," observed my father, "and our safest plan will be to keep them outside until we ascertain their business. Let your mother know, call Mr Tidey and Dan, and close the window-shutters as fast as you can."

The latter order Biddy set about zealously executing, aided by Dan and my mother, while my father and I, joined by Mr Tidey, stood at the front door to receive our unwelcome guests.

"What brings you here?" asked my father; "I should have thought after the way you behaved at your last visit that you would have been ashamed to show your faces."

"That's neither here nor there, captain," answered one of the men; "we have notice that you are hiding a runaway slave, and we have come to demand him from you; if you don't give him up, you will learn that we have the power to take him by force."

"No man shall enter my house unless I invite him," said my father calmly, "as to taking any one out of my house by force, you can only do that when you have conquered me. Whether you can conquer me or not is to be seen."

The men were somewhat taken aback by this address, and began to ride up and down in front of the house, casting doubtful glances at him and Mr Tidey.

At last they once more pulled up, and one of them exclaimed, "Come, captain, this won't do! I ask you whether or not you have a negro boy anywhere about your premises? If you have, give him up without more words. He belongs to Silas Bracher, who is not the man to allow his property to be stolen from him."

"I have stolen no man's property," answered my father, "and as to allowing strangers to come into my house, under any pretext whatever, I don't intend to do it, so you have my answer. I'll give you corn for your horses and food for yourselves, but over this threshold you don't step with my good will."

"Then you don't deny having harboured the slave we are in search of?" exclaimed one of the men. "Come, give him up, I say, or it will be the worse for you!"

"I don't acknowledge having afforded shelter to a black, and I don't deny having done so. I have a perfect right to receive any strangers into my house who come to me in distress, and if they trust to me I'll defend them with my life," said my father.

"Your life's not worth the snuff of a candle, then," answered the leader of the party, one of Mr Bracher's principal overseers.

The men, retiring to a little distance, consulted together, but seeing the muzzles of our rifles protruding from the windows, evidently considered that it would not be prudent to attempt any act of violence. After some time the overseer again rode forward. He must have felt sure that my father would not commence hostilities, or he would have kept at a distance.

"Captain, I give you warning that you are bringing down destruction on yourself and family," he shouted; "you have either helped a runaway slave to escape, or you have still got

him in hiding. It would never do for us Kentuckians to let such an act pass unpunished; we should have half the slaves in the state bolting for the borders, and claiming the protection of emancipists like yourself and others." The speaker bestowed an epithet on my father which I need not repeat. "I ask you, once more, have you got the slave, and if you have, will you give him up?"

"I again answer that if I had the slave I would not give him up," replied my father in a firm tone; "if you or your master attempt to injure my family or my property, I shall defend myself as I have a right to do, and should any of you be killed, your blood will be upon your own heads."

"I call no man master, but if you mean Silas Bracher, he is not the person to change his intentions, so I shall give him your answer," replied the overseer, who, without more ado, turned his horse's head, and rejoined his companions, when the three rode away in the direction from whence they had come. Though pretty confident that the men had gone away, my father thought it prudent to keep a watch on their movements. Before they could have got to any great distance I hurried out to follow them. From a hill, a short distance to the south of the house a view could be obtained along the road they would probably take. A grove of trees, with some thick brushwood, enabled me to watch them without the risk of being discovered should they turn their heads.

I soon made them out, and saw them riding on without stopping until out of sight. Convinced that they had really gone away, I was on the point of returning when I saw two of them, as I supposed, coming back, spurring their horses over the level road. It was a question whether I could reach the house before them. I ran as fast as my legs could carry me until I got to another point whence I could take a look at them without being seen. I then saw by their dress and the colour of their horses that they were not the men I fancied, but that one of them was Uncle Denis, while the other was a stranger. I therefore ran down the hill to meet them.

"What has happened up at the farm, Mike?" asked my uncle, after we had exchanged greetings; "we met just now three of Bracher's men, who were swearing away at your father and all of you in a fashion which made me fear that they had either done some mischief, or intended doing it. I don't think they knew that we were coming here, or they would have picked a quarrel with us, for which they seemed very much disposed."

I relieved my uncle's mind by telling him that the men had only used threatening language, but I thought it prudent not to say that the fugitive slave was actually in the house, not knowing the character of the stranger who was with him. My uncle now introduced him to me as Mr McDermont, a countryman, who said he had come over to settle in the States, and who, not yet having any experience as a backwoodsman, had determined on purchasing an improved farm. "I offered him mine, but he does not wish to employ slave labour, and would prefer obtaining one in a free state. I therefore brought him here, feeling sure that your father would gladly assist him in finding the style of location he desires."

Uncle Denis and his companion were, of course, heartily welcomed at Uphill.

"I am so thankful that you have come, Denis," said my mother, who had been much alarmed at the late occurrence, "do, pray, remain and assist my husband in defending our property, for I dread lest those men should carry their threats into execution!"

Uncle Denis did his best to reassure her, saying that he did not think Mr Bracher would venture on any act of violence, but promising to stay some time at Uphill, until Mr McDermont had settled in the neighbourhood.

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## Chapter Four.

**Dio in hiding—The agent of the Swampyville Land Company—  
The surveying party—Mr Tidey and the slave set off  
northward—Living in a state of siege—Unexpected return of  
Mr McDermont and Peter—An imaginary city—An offer to  
purchase Uphill—Our tutor's sudden return—Dio nearly  
recaptured—In the cave—An expected attack—Dan and I  
start off to relieve the slave—Boxer discovers an enemy—A  
brave dog—Our retreat to the house—Sleepy Peter—Just in  
time—Prepare for action.**

The first thing now to be done was to send poor Dio away, as my father had previously intended. He was strong enough to bear the journey, but when he was told that it would be necessary for him to go, he looked so miserable that we all begged that he might be allowed to remain.



"I much regret having to send him off, but for his own sake as well as ours, go he must," answered my father; "he shall be escorted until he is delivered into the safe keeping of our friends, the Greys, though there is a risk of his being suspected, should he be seen in my company."

"Let me take charge of him, then," said Mr Tidey; "we will make our way through the forest by unfrequented paths with rifles in our hands as if on a shooting expedition, and shall run little risk of falling in with anyone who will interfere with us."

Our tutor's offer was accepted. My father wrote a letter to Mr Grey, introducing him, at the same time so carefully worded, that, should it fall into the hands of enemies, Dio might not be betrayed.

It was arranged that they should start the following morning. The poor negro was overcome with grief when he heard what was decided.

"Dis poor niggar break him heart leave Missy Kathleen, him no more learn read!" he exclaimed, bursting into tears. So powerful was the effect produced that he was taken seriously ill, and the next morning was utterly unable to proceed. I am sure he was not shamming, for he tried to get up and prepare for his journey. He recovered somewhat during the day, and acknowledging that it was his duty to go for the sake of our family, declared that he should be ready to start whenever Mr Tidey wished.

That evening a report was brought to the house by one of the farm-labourers that two suspicious characters had been seen in the neighbourhood, and from the description of the men we had no doubt that they were the same who had before paid us a visit and had been driven off by Biddy's heroism.

On hearing this, Uncle Denis offered to go out to try and ascertain what they were about. I begged to accompany him. We hunted round in all directions, and were returning home when we caught sight of two persons skulking in a wood at a short distance from the house. On seeing us they beat a rapid retreat, and darkness coming on they managed to get away before we could overtake them, but Uncle Denis was of opinion that they were watching the house in the hopes of catching Dio.

This surmise was ultimately proved to be correct, showing that by some means or other they had information that he was still with us. My father, fearing that the black would be followed and

recaptured, determined to postpone sending him off for two or three days; hoping in the meantime to mislead the slave-hunters and make them suppose that Dio had escaped. We took good care during this time not to leave the house unguarded, my father, Uncle Denis, or Mr Tidey remaining at home with either Dan or me as well as Biddy and Peter while the windows, unless some one was on the watch near them, were kept closed and barred. Our guest, accompanied by one or more of the party, made excursions in the direction my father thought he would most probably find a location, but he could hear of no farm at all likely to answer his purpose. His object soon became known, and the fourth morning after his arrival a stranger was seen approaching the house. He introduced himself as Mr Nicholas Chouse, agent for the Swampyville Land Company.

In the most glowing terms he described the new township which had been lately formed in the north-west part of the state, advising my father and Mr McDermont to become purchasers of the finest allotments which he had to offer for sale. Mr Chouse was a man of great volubility of tongue, unbounded assurance, with a look of determination which showed that he would not have his word doubted.

"These lands, sir, will become the most valuable in the State, I may say, with perfect confidence, in the whole Union; unrivalled water power, magnificent pastures and arable land capable of producing crops of corn such as the world has never seen. All that is required to develop their resources is capital and labour, and labour will always follow where capital leads the way. When once the country is opened up, we shall drain Canada of her population, and the inhabitants of the eastern states will come flocking in crowds, some to find employment, others to purchase the lots improved by the early settlers, paying a thousand per cent at least on the capital expended. You, sir, look like a man who would not neglect so favourable an opportunity of realising a fortune vastly surpassing that of the proudest duke in England," he said, turning to Mr McDermont.

Our guest listened with eager ears. If only half what Mr Chouse said was true, it would be well worth his while at all events to inspect the country. If he found it even moderately answer the account given, though contrary to his previous intention, he might wisely become a purchaser.

The land agent, seeing that he made some impression, pressed home his advantage. I cannot repeat all he said, but he finally succeeded in inducing Mr McDermont to invest in a small allotment with the right of purchasing as much more of the

surrounding country as he could desire. Had it not been for Dio, my father or uncle would have accompanied him, but they were unwilling to leave Uphill while there was a risk of annoyance from the slave-hunters. It was finally arranged that Mr McDermont should set out with Peter, who was well used to travelling, and would be of great assistance to him. Mr Chouse had given him maps of the country and a plan of the township, so that he would have no difficulty in finding the location of which he had become the happy possessor for the sum of two hundred dollars, which had been paid into the agent's hands. As Mr McDermont and Peter set off in one direction, the agent departed in another, observing, "that he had a round to make, and would rejoin Mr McDermont at Swampyville."

We had some hope that Peter being seen to leave Uphill might mislead any of the Kentuckians who were on the watch; that should they follow him, Dio might have a better opportunity of escaping.

Accordingly, the next morning, before daybreak, habited as a hunter, with a knapsack on his back, a gun in his hand, a broad-brimmed hat completely shading his face, he and Mr Tidey set out on their journey northward. All the family were up to see them off, and we offered up a prayer for their safety. Dan and I wanted to accompany them, but our father pointed out that it might be dangerous to do so, as, should any of the people on the watch for Dio meet us coming back, they might suspect the direction the travellers had taken, and follow them up.

We lived literally in a state of siege, for every day information was brought us that suspected persons were hovering about, and it was evident that Mr Bracher's emissaries had not given up hope of recapturing the fugitive.

Some days passed away. Uncle Denis grew impatient, he was naturally anxious to return to his farm, and yet was unwilling to leave my father and mother while matters remained in this unpleasant state. My father was as firm as at first in his resolution not to allow any persons to enter his house without his permission, and it was impossible to say when we might receive another visit from the fellows who had before tried to force themselves in. Should he now permit them to enter, they would naturally conclude that the slave had been concealed in the house, though he had now made good his escape.

We did not expect to see Mr Tidey for some time, should he have succeeded in conveying Dio to a safe asylum, nor was it

likely that Mr McDermont would return until he had made arrangements for locating himself on his new purchase. He would, however, certainly send back his companion to report the progress he had made. Great was our surprise, therefore, when one evening, soon after dark, he and Peter arrived at the house, looking travel-stained and weary.

"I hope you are satisfied with Swampyville?" said my father, after he had welcomed our friend.

"Faith, sir, I should be an easily pleased gentleman if I was," answered Mr McDermont. "I've been thoroughly gulled by that fellow Chouse. As it was my first, so it shall be my last journey in search of a new location. I won't trouble you with an account of all the adventures we met with. For the first two or three days we got on pretty well, barring the rough accommodation and the rougher inhabitants of this wild country. I thought we must have taken the wrong road. Nothing could I hear of Swampyville, although the map showed me that we were pursuing the right course. At last we arrived at a river which I guessed fell into the mighty Missouri, but our location was some way farther down. Accordingly, leaving our horses, I hired a boat, in the expectation of reaching it more easily by water than by land. Faith, sir, I was not wrong in that respect. The plan showed me a fine city, rising on the banks of the stream, with broad, handsome streets running at right angles to each other, a court-house, gaol, two banks, three or four hotels, masonic hall, and churches and chapels innumerable, proving what a moral and religious people were to be my neighbours. At length I reached the spot where the city should have been, but the water had risen and had, I concluded, flowed over the whole, for not a building of any sort could I discover. Certain well defined land-marks existed, and I could make out that I was in the midst of Swampyville, but not a trace could I discover of the property of which I had become the happy possessor. I stood up and gazed round me in despair. 'Yes, massa,' said Peter, letting his oars drop from his hands, 'dis Swampyville, no doubt 'bout dat, only de houses and de streets not here, much easier to draw dem on de paper dan to build dem up.' Peter was right; I had been bamboozled and lost my dollars."

"You must not be cast down, my friend," said my father, "you are not the only person who has been taken in in the same manner. There is however, no lack of first-rate localities in the country, both for cities and towns, or of arable and pasture land. It will be a lesson to all of us not to purchase property until we have visited the spot and ascertained its value."

"I'm half inclined to go back to ould Ireland, where, although a landlord gets shot now and then, and the people are not always as peaceable as might be desired, honest labourers can be obtained for money, if not for love, and the land is free from the curse of slavery. If, however, I could find an estate in tolerably good order, such as yours for instance, I would become the purchaser, and settle down in this new world of yours. The dollars paid to Mr Chouse are lost, but I have still enough money left to buy and cultivate a fair-sized property."

"Are you in earnest, Mr McDermont?" asked my father; "if you are, and would like to buy Uphill, I will consider the matter. I had no thoughts of leaving the place, but circumstances may occur which might induce me to part with it."

"Never was more in earnest in my life," said our guest. "I should have wished to be your neighbour rather than your successor, but if you have a mind to sell, I am ready to buy."

My father and Uncle Denis talked the matter over. To our surprise, my uncle said that he had had an offer for his farm and had made up his mind to accept it, and that if we moved west he would accompany us. My mother, however was very unwilling to leave Uphill. We had all been born there, and she and all of us were attached to the place.

Mr McDermont appeared to be in no great hurry, and told my father that he would give him a week to decide.

That very evening as we were sitting down to supper, a knock was heard at the door, which was kept barred and bolted since the visit from the Kentuckians. My father, thinking that they had possibly returned, got up, and, taking his rifle in his hand, went to the door.

"Who knocks?" he asked.

"Mark Tidey," was the answer. "Quick, quick, let me in."

My father, recognising our tutor's voice, withdrew the bolts. Mr Tidey entered, looking pale and thoroughly knocked up, his dress torn and bespattered with mud.

"What has happened, Mr Tidey?" asked my father; "has poor Dio been recaptured?"

"We will close the door first, and I will then tell you, sir," answered the Dominie, hurriedly pushing back the bolts. "I have

been pursued, and before long the villains will be here, if I mistake not."

"We will be ready for them if they come, and teach them a lesson they'll not forget in a hurry," said my father.

"Oh! Mr Tidey, has poor Dio been retaken?" asked my mother, as he sank into a chair at the table.

"I hope not, and indeed I have good reason to believe that he has escaped them," replied our tutor. "I fully expected to carry him safe to his destination, when, as we were making our way through a forest the second day after leaving this, I heard the bay of a hound, which I felt sure by the sound was one of those accursed dogs, used by the slave-owners to track runaway negroes. Dio heard it also and gave himself up for lost. I fortunately knew the country we were in, for I had visited it several times during my shooting excursions, and I remembered some rocky ground away to the left in which I had discovered a cave, the entrance concealed by a thick mass of brushwood. I had taken shelter there during a storm, and had spent the time in exploring it. It was perfectly dry, with several passages leading to smaller caverns, in which fifty men might lie concealed, with little risk of being discovered by a stranger to the place. I at once bethought me, if we could reach it we might be safe from pursuit, and remain there until the slave-hunters had passed by.

"We were making our way towards it, when the increasing loudness of the hound's voice convinced us that we could not reach it before we should be overtaken. Had there been two dogs, I should have told Dio to remain with me, but as there was but one I determined to tackle the brute, and directed him to hurry on to the cavern, where I should join him. Scarcely had he disappeared in the brushwood, than the dog came in sight, with its nose to the ground, following up our trail. Its masters must be, I guessed, close behind. Lifting my rifle, as the hound was a dozen paces from me, I fired. Its loud baying ceased, and over it rolled with its legs kicking in the air. Feeling sure that it was done for, I turned and ran, having just time to get behind some thick bushes, when the Kentuckians reached the spot where the dog lay dead. I could hear their loud oaths and execrations on the man who had shot their animal. They seemed puzzled as to who had done the deed, and vowed vengeance on his head should they catch him, whoever he was. Presently I heard their footsteps pass close by. I had had no time to reload, so had they discovered me I should have been in their power. I determined, however, to have a fight for it rather

than become their prisoner, or allow myself to be murdered on the spot. It was very evident that they had no experience as backwoodsmen, or they would have discovered my trail. They had been depending on their dog, and were now completely at fault.

“He must have run that way, and can’t have got far, for I heard the shot not five minutes ago,” exclaimed one of them.

“On, on, we shall soon overtake him, whoever he is.” These words greatly relieved my mind and I felt sure, from the sounds which reached my ears, that they were hurrying on to the northward. As soon as I calculated that they were out of sight, I made my way towards the cavern. I found Dio crouching down at the entrance.

“We will hide until to-morrow morning and then pursue our course,” I whispered. “By that time the Kentuckians will probably have turned back and given up the pursuit, as it is very clear they can do nothing without their dog.”

Dio agreed to this, and by searching about we soon discovered a hollow in which we could remain concealed until the following morning, when I proposed going out first to ascertain whether the coast was clear. There was abundance of dry wood not far from the mouth of the cavern. We soon collected enough to keep up a fire during the night, and in the spot we had chosen there was no fear of its reflection being seen outside. It served to cook our provisions and at the same time scare off any wolves or bears who might visit us. We were not disturbed, however, during the night, although nearly stifled with the smoke from the small fire we kept up. According to my intention, soon after daylight the next morning, I alone first went out to reconnoitre. Fortunate it was that I did so, for on reaching the edge of the forest I found the fire still burning where our pursuers had camped, and I had little doubt that they were watching for the man who had killed their hound. I therefore turned back, so that I could keep concealed among the trees, and before long I caught sight of them in the distance. This showed me that it would be prudent to remain in our cavern another day, until the fellows had got weary of looking for me. I was thankful that they had no Indians with them, or they would have tracked me without difficulty. In the afternoon I again went out, making my way cautiously, lest I should come upon them. I had made up my mind to proceed by myself some way to the northward until I could reach a settler’s hut, from whom I could learn whether the Kentuckians had gone on or turned back again, when I caught sight of them in

the distance, making apparently for the very spot where they had rested the previous night. They had evidently ascertained from someone or other that the black and I had not gone that way. My only course was to return to the cave and to remain there in the hopes of tiring out our pursuers. Though they were determined fellows, they knew nothing of the country, and were completely at fault without their hound.

"As we had plenty of provisions, we could remain another whole day, by which time I hoped to find the coast clear. Once more I went out, leaving my knapsack with Dio, and taking only my rifle and ammunition. Instead of following the path I had pursued on previous occasions, I made a circuit to the right towards a hill, from whence I expected to catch sight of the spot where the Kentuckians had camped. Should I see no smoke ascending, I might hope that they had abandoned the search and gone homewards. I had nearly reached it, and was proceeding perhaps with less caution than before, when I came full in sight of the fellows. I knew them at once, and was still more convinced who they were by hearing a ball whistle past my ears. Although I might have shot one of them in return, I had no wish to take the life of a fellow-creature, but determined to trust to my heels. Off I set therefore as fast as I could run, and calculated that I knew the country better than they did, and that I could keep well ahead, thus drawing them away from Dio's hiding-place. My intention was afterwards to return, and, together with the black, to continue the journey. On they came after me, and I could hear their voices shouting for many a mile, showing that they were still following. I have never had such a run in my life, but I have the satisfaction of believing that I have assisted Dio to make good his escape, and if they come here, you will be able to assure them that you have no slave concealed within your doors."

My father highly approved of Mr Tidey's conduct and the courage and judgment he had exhibited. We had now to consider the best way of relieving Dio, who was certain to remain in the cave until some one came from us. Mr Tidey was too much knocked up to set off immediately, so my father gave Dan and me permission to start away by daylight. By taking a circuitous course, we hoped to avoid the risk of meeting the Kentuckians, should they be still on the watch for the black. We were to try and reach the cave by nightfall, which, as we knew the spot and the country thoroughly, we expected easily to do. We were looking out all the evening for a visit from Mr Tidey's pursuers, but for some cause or other they did not appear; had they done so, we were prepared to give them a warm reception.



Besides our guest and Uncle Denis, our father, Dan and I, we had in the house, Martin Prentis the overseer, and Peter, all of whom were well able to handle their rifles, while Biddy was as likely to make as good a fight of it as anyone of us with her broomstick or a hot poker, which she had kept in the stove for the purpose.

The evening, however, passed away without any disturbance, although we two or three times heard the dogs barking in the huts of the farm-labourers, while our own animals in the outbuildings barked in return. Dan and I got ready for our journey before we lay down to sleep. Fancying that it was time to start, without waiting for daylight, we called up Peter to let us out, but we did not arouse the rest of the family. We agreed to breakfast when we had got some miles from home, and by making an early start we felt confident that we could perform the distance easily before sunset.

"Massa, don't let those white niggers catch you. Better dat Boxer go wid you, he take care if dey come near to let you know. Dey no catch him asleep," said Peter, as with candle in hand, a red night-cap, and his striped pink shirt-tails fluttering about his legs, he opened the door for us to go out.

"Never fear, Peter, we will keep a sharp look-out for the Kentuckians," answered Dan; "if they show fight, we shall be ready for them; we know how to shoot as well as they do."

Following Peter's advice, we went to the stables and released Boxer, who leaped round and round, trying to lick our faces with pleasure at the thought of a day's sport, which he supposed we were about to give him. We had our knapsacks on our backs with our usual camp traps, besides a good supply of provisions, as we must remain out one night, and should probably have to stay with Dio until Mr Tidey could return to escort him on his journey. We had not proceeded more than two or three hundred yards when Boxer gave a low growl, and then breaking into a fierce bark, dashed forward.

"Curse that dog, he'll be waking up the people, and may be fixing his fangs into the throat of one of us," exclaimed some one in a gruff voice, who was concealed apparently behind a snake fence some little way off.

"I'll stick my bowie-knife into him, if he comes near me," said another person.

Dan was about to cry out and call the dog back, but I stopped him in time.

"Keep silence!" I whispered, "those must be the Kentuckians; they are on the watch, probably intending to make a rush for the door when Biddy opens it in the morning, hoping to surprise the rest of the family in bed. The best thing we can do is to go back and let our father know what we have discovered: crouch down so that they may not see us. I suppose they have been creeping forward to get close up to the house without being discovered."

The loud barking of the dog prevented any risk of my voice being heard, which, low as I spoke, it might have been in the still night air. The men, whoever they were, did not fire, probably because they could not catch sight of Boxer, who was rushing from side to side, concealed among some low shrubs and thick grass. I hoped when he found that we were returning, he would also retreat and avoid the risk he was running of being shot.

We hurried back, Boxer still keeping up his barking, preventing our footsteps being heard.

"But I am afraid poor Boxer will be shot," said Dan.

"No fear of that; the men, if they wish to surprise us, won't venture to fire," I observed, "and if we call him it will show them that they have been discovered; better let him take his chance, he understands what he is about. While he keeps up his barking, the sound of the door opening will not be heard."

We accordingly crept back towards the house, but on reaching it found that Peter had closed the door, and we had to make our way round to the window of the room in which he slept. We tapped on the shutter, but Peter did not answer.

"He has fallen asleep again, the lazy fellow!" said Dan in a low voice.

We knocked louder and louder.

"Who dare?" at length asked a voice from within.

"Open the window and I will tell you," I said in a whisper, but sufficiently loud for Peter to hear me, I hoped.

"Who dare?" he again asked.

"Open the window, quick, quick," I repeated, putting my mouth to the chink where the shutters joined.

"What! Massa Mike!" exclaimed Peter, "is dat you?"

"Yes, yes, open at once," I answered, almost losing patience and speaking louder than I had hitherto done.

At that moment Boxer had ceased barking. Scarcely had the words left my mouth than I feared that we might have been heard by the Kentuckians.

Boxer again burst out into a furious bark, very much nearer to us, showing that he was retreating before the foe. By this time Peter had opened the shutter, and, assisted by the black, Dan and I scrambled in at the window. As we did so we heard footsteps, when Boxer, who was a prudent dog, as well as a brave one, feeling that he had done his duty in warning us and should be safer inside the citadel than outside, with one bound followed us into the room.

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## Chapter Five.

**The attack on Uphill—My father's warning—The beginning of the fight—Our victory—A cowardly revenge—Mr Tidey acts as scout—Mr McDermont renews his proposal to purchase our farm—We resolve to go West—Uncle Denis decides to join us—An expedition to Dio's relief—We discover the cave—We find Dio—His delight at the prospect of returning—Too weak for the journey—Our arrival home—Preparations for departure—Uncle Denis with us again—The march commenced—Cross the Illinois river—On the prairies of Missouri—"Westward Ho!"—Possibilities of danger—The proper place to camp—The way to bivouac—The rear-guard.**

No sooner was Boxer safe inside the room, than Peter began hurriedly to close the shutter, when we heard the report of a gun, and a bullet with a loud thud struck it. Fortunately the wood was thick, or one of us might have been shot. Peter, quick as lightning, closed the shutter and put up the bar.

"Dem rascally Kentuckians do dat!" he exclaimed; "hand me your rifle, massa, and me pay dem back. Stan' by to open de shutter for me to fire."

"No, no, Peter," I said; "the men are not likely to show themselves, and the other is sure to fire the instant he sees the window open."

The shot had aroused my father and mother and the rest of the household, and we heard my father and Uncle Denis calling to each other. Peter having struck a light, we went into the hall, where we all soon assembled, with the exception of my mother and Kathleen, when I narrated what had occurred.

"The fellows are bent on mischief, there can be no doubt about that," said my father. "They are probably not aware how many there are of us in the house, and expect to force their way in without much opposition."

Uncle Denis proposed rushing out and getting hold of the fellows who had fired, supposing that they were waiting for others to come up before attacking the house. My father, however, advised that we should remain within doors.

"If we go out the fellows will see us, and may pick us off with ease, while, on the other hand, they cannot approach without showing themselves, and we shall be perfectly justified in shooting them down should they come with hostile intent."

My father's first care was to place my mother and Kathleen in safety, and to insist on their going into a store-closet, to which no bullets could penetrate should any pierce the shutters. Black Rose begged leave to accompany them, but Biddy indignantly refused to hide herself, declaring that she only wished "the spalpeens" would show their ugly faces at the door, and she would put some marks on them which they would carry to their graves. Having thus expressed herself, she hastened into the kitchen, where she lighted the fire, blowing away with all her might to get the poker into a red heat.

My father's first care was to set one of us to watch at the window of each room, to give the alarm should any attempt be made to force them, while he himself stood at the front entrance. Peter was posted at the rear of the house. Loop-holes had been formed in the shutters through which we could look and see what was taking place outside. They had slides so that they could be closed in an instant. As no lamps were left burning in any of the rooms, those outside could not distinguish

the small openings, while the moon, though waning, afforded light sufficient to enable us to see anyone moving about round the house.

Our preparations for defence were made in a shorter time than I have taken to describe them. I was looking through the loophole in my window-shutter in the front of the house when I saw a person stealing cautiously forward along the road which led to it. I could make out that he had a rifle in his hand, which he was holding ready for action. Presently half-a-dozen more men came in sight, when their leader stopped until they got up with him. I instantly called out to my father that the enemy were close upon us.

"We must be certain that they come with hostile intent. Let no one fire until I give the word," he said; "I will speak to them first, and hear what they want."

There was little doubt about that, however; before my father could open the loophole, a thundering blow was dealt with the trunk of a tree against the door, making it shake on its hinges, though the tough wood held firm.

"Who dares thus attack my house?" shouted my father; "off with you, or take the consequences."

A shower of bullets which pinged against the door and walls on either side was the reply. Our assailants, disappointed in their first attempt to break open the door, hoped to alarm us into submission.

"Open the door, and let us in; we come on lawful business to look after a runaway slave, and have him we will, alive or dead, although we burn your house about your heads," shouted one of the men outside.

Uncle Denis thought from the sound of the voice that it was Mr Bracher himself who spoke.

"We have no runaway slave within, but open the door we will not; so if you again make the attempt to force it, your blood be on your own heads," answered my father in a firm voice.

"That's all empty boast," was the answer; "if you hurt any of our men, not one of you shall escape with your lives."

"Faith! we're wasting time talking to the fellows," cried Uncle Denis; "let's begin to treat them as they deserve. If they don't

go away, I'll knock over that big blackguard Bracher, and his crew will soon be taking to their heels if they haven't him to lead them on."

My father, although a soldier, was as averse as any man to shedding blood.

"We will show them that they are not likely to succeed, and that they will pay dearly for the attempt if they again try to break open the door," he said. "Mr Bracher," he shouted, "understand that I don't wish to be your enemy, and have no unkind feeling towards you. You have made an unwarrantable attack on my house. No harm has as yet come of it. If you will go peaceably away I will overlook the insult and take no further steps in the matter; but if not, I once for all warn you that I am well prepared to defend my house, and that you will pay dearly should you try to enter it. I again say your slave is not within my doors, so that you will gain nothing if you succeed, which you have no chance of doing."

My father in speaking this had some hopes of inducing the Kentuckians to change their intentions, and at all events he might prolong the time so that daylight would surprise them before they should recommence the attack. It would then be more easy to distinguish the leaders and shoot them down, when the rest would in all probability beat a hasty retreat.

Of this Silas Bracher, if he was there in person, was probably aware. In spite of the warning the Kentuckians had received, they, supposing perhaps from our not having fired that we had no ammunition, or were afraid of doing so, again assaulted the door with their battering-ram; it, however, as before, stoutly withstood the thundering blows they bestowed on it.

"If they will have it they must," at length exclaimed my father; and scarcely were the words out of his mouth than Uncle Denis, the overseer, and our guest fired. I was going to fire when my father shouted to Dan and me not to pull a trigger. A cry arose from the midst of our assailants, followed by a loud shout.

"Death to all within the house! Batter in the door, boys; a few strokes and it will be done."

The ram thundered against the door. I at that moment looked through my loophole, and I caught sight of a party in reserve, who the next instant sent a shower of bullets rattling against the shutters and walls, one shot narrowly missing my head as it whistled through the loophole. I therefore thrust out my rifle

and fired in the direction from whence the shot came. Whether or not I had hit anyone I could not tell. I was too well-trained a sportsman to lose a moment before again reloading. All our little garrison were now engaged in firing and loading as fast as they could. My father kept his post at the door, and Uncle Denis and the overseer stationed themselves at the windows nearest to him on either side, ready, should the door be burst open, to assist in driving back the miscreants, while Biddy remained intently watching the proceedings, with her hand on the red-hot poker, prepared to help in the defence. As I could not bring my rifle to bear on the party with the battering-ram, I contented myself with firing at those in the distance, but as they kept as much as possible under cover, I could not tell whether my shot took effect. The blows which the door received threatened every instant to break it in, and I suspected that we should have a fearful struggle before we should succeed in driving back our assailants. Their cries and shouts increased. Excited with rage and disappointment they rushed again and again to the assault. The firing also became hotter and hotter. Fortunately, so well sheltered were all our party, as we only went to the window to fire, then retreating behind the walls, that not one of us had hitherto been hurt. From the sounds which reached my ears I believed that the rifles of those of the garrison who commanded the entrance were taking effect. Presently, after another attempt to break open the door, I saw our assailants in the grey light of morning beating a rapid retreat and dragging along with them three or four of their number who had been either killed or badly wounded.

"Victory, victory?" shouted Uncle Denis, "Erin-go-braugh, I knew we should do for the audacious villains. Hurrah, hurrah?" The rest of us echoed his shout, including Biddy from the kitchen, while she flourished her red-hot poker above her head.

My father hastened to assure my mother and Kathleen that we were safe for the present, while we all shook hands round, congratulating ourselves on our victory.

"We must not be too certain that we have got rid of them altogether," observed my father; "those Kentuckians are persevering fellows. If they think they have a chance of success they will be at us again."

Increasing daylight enabled us to see for some distance around the house, but no one could we discover. We all began to believe that they had finally gone away, when Peter, who was looking through a window at the side of the house exclaimed—

"See, massa, see! look dare!"

A bright flame shot up, its size rapidly increasing. It was in the direction of a barn in which a quantity of corn and other produce was stored.

"The scoundrels have set it on fire in revenge!" exclaimed Uncle Denis; "let's be out and after them."

"The very thing they would wish us to do," observed my father; "probably one of their objects in firing the building was the hope that we should rush out to extinguish the flames. Provided the fire does not extend, it will be wiser to remain here."

Uncle Denis agreed that my father was right. That he was so we afterwards ascertained from one of the farm-labourers who had cautiously followed the Kentuckians.

The sun at length rose, when Mr Tidey insisted on going out to learn whether they had actually taken their departure. To this my father consented, and the Dominie set off with his rifle, accompanied by Boxer. On going out, he found numerous splashes of blood in the front near the battering-ram, showing that the Kentuckians had been deservedly punished for the outrage.

We had reason to be thankful that we had all escaped without injury. Towards evening Mr Tidey came back bringing the satisfactory intelligence that he had traced the retreating party to the Ohio.

Severe as was the lesson they had received, it was but too probable that they would return and take another opportunity of wreaking their vengeance on our heads. My father was a brave man, and had he been alone would have remained and defended his property to the last, but he thought of the danger to which my mother and we were exposed, and this made him more willing than he otherwise would have been, to listen to the proposal of Mr McDermont.

"You'll be after having a troubled life of it here, captain," observed our guest, the next day. "For my part I am not altogether unaccustomed to such proceedings in the old country, and have no wife or children to be troubled about, and should rather like the excitement of the sort of life I should have to lead here for a year or two, until I have taught the Kentuckians to leave me alone in peace. This makes me bold to offer you a price for your farm, should you be disposed to move



farther westward or northward, out of their way. I know how to deal with fellows of their character, though I should be puzzled if I had redskins to guard against, or a new country to clear. What say you now to twenty thousand dollars? It will go a long way westward. I am aware that your farm, under other circumstances, would be worth more than that. Should you accept my proposal, I would advise you not to migrate to Swampyville. You have the advantage of my experience in that matter," he added, laughing.

My father took time to consider Mr McDermont's proposal, and he and Uncle Denis had a long consultation on the subject. He finally decided to accept the offer, and greatly to his satisfaction Uncle Denis told him that he had made up his mind to part with his farm in Kentucky and to cast in his lot with us.

"I wish that I had done so years ago," he said. "I had an offer just before I left home: I shall not be long in settling the matter."

Our uncle was a man of action, and observing that he should give Mr Bracher a wide berth, and promising to return in a few days, at once set about making preparations for a start.

Mr McDermont was ready to purchase the furniture and everything we did not require. Dan and I meantime set off to try and find poor Dio, and either to escort him on his way to Mr Grey's, or should he desire to return, to bring him back with us, as my father considered that for the present he would run no risk of being captured, and he might prefer continuing with us to seeking his fortune among strangers. We gladly undertook the duty, having little doubt of what he would like to do.

"I am afraid the poor fellow must have been starving all this time, as the provisions Mr Tidey left with him can scarcely have lasted more than couple of days," observed Dan as we trudged along.

"He had his rifle, you must remember," I answered, "and although he may not be a very good shot, he will be able to knock over a few birds or a racoon, or an opossum, and there are berries in abundance growing in the neighbourhood of the cave."

Although I said this, I was well aware that there were many dangers to which Dio might have been exposed. Wolves or bears while prowling about might have found him asleep, or he might have fallen into the hands of Indians, or he might have

been discovered by white men, who, suspecting him to be a runaway slave, might have secured him in the hope of obtaining a reward for bringing him back. There was also the possibility, should he have finished his provisions, that he might have been afraid of going out in search of more, and that he might be suffering from starvation. We therefore hurried on as fast as our legs could carry us. We did not pass a single farm on our route where we could obtain assistance should we require it, although there were several away to the eastward.

In spite of the utmost exertions we could make, it was nearly sunset before we reached the neighbourhood of the cave. We looked about, no sign of Dio could we discover, not the slightest trail to show that he had left the cavern or that anyone had entered it. So far this was satisfactory. Though we knew the locality, the mouth of the cavern itself was not very easy to find. We had therefore to hunt about for some time, until at length we discovered the bushes which grew in front of it, when we at once began to creep through them; we crawled on till we found ourselves in the mouth of the cave. Mr Tidey had minutely described the spot where he had left Dio. We groped our way forward expecting to see the light from his fire, but not a gleam came forth from any of the passages to direct us.

"Oh, suppose a bear and her cubs are hid away anywhere, what shall we do?" exclaimed Dan.

"Shoot the bear and knock the cubs on the head," I answered, although I knew that was more easily said than done.

Dan and I called to Dio in vain. Again I shouted, "Dio, Dio, answer us, pray do, if you are here."

"Listen! I hear a voice; it's very faint, but not far off," said Dan.

I stopped shouting, and distinctly heard the words—

"Here, massa, here, all in de dark; dis niggar bery sick."

On this I struck a match, and by its faint light I saw a figure lying on the ground in a recess of the cave. There were a number of sticks collected for fire-wood piled up close to him, so putting the match to some dry leaves which we swept up together, we quickly had a blaze.

"What has happened, Dio?" I asked, kneeling down by his side.

"No matches, massa," answered Dio; "and him eat up all de food Massa Tidey left. For two days him had noting to put in him mouth."

"You shall have something then without delay," I said, giving him a bottle, which I had fortunately filled at the last spring we had passed. He eagerly swallowed a draught, and we then produced the provisions we had brought. Though weak from his previous illness, the poor black was not so far gone as to be unable to eat a hearty meal. This quickly revived him. He told us that his fear of being captured by the emissaries of his old master had prevented him going out in search of food, and that he had imprudently on the first day consumed the provisions left by Mr Tidey, which, eked out, might have lasted almost to the present time. His joy at hearing that the Kentuckians had been defeated, greatly assisted to recover him, although he expressed his regret that we should have been exposed to danger on his account. When we told him we had come to escort him on his way to Mr Grey's, his countenance fell.

"But my father says we may take you back, if you are willing to accompany us to the west, where we shall be at a distance from the slave-states," I added.

"With all dis niggas heart," exclaimed Dio; "me go whar' massa go; right 'way to de Rocky Mountains, if him like."

We spent the night in the cavern, neither wolves nor bears showing their noses, and the next morning Dio, after a good breakfast, declared that he was well able to go back to Uphill. On seeing him attempt to walk, however, I judged that it would be prudent to let him take another day's rest, while we went in search of game and obtained some more water from a spring which rose at some distance from the cave.

We had capital sport, and a fat turkey which I shot put some more strength into Dio's muscles. We were very happy in our roomy cave, which was large enough to afford shelter to a dozen families, and we agreed that we should like to spend several days there. However, we were wanted at home, and Dio having completely recovered, we set off at daybreak the following morning.

We stepped out so briskly, that although we made a circuit to avoid the risk of falling in with strangers on the high road, we reached home soon after sunset. We found the preparations for our departure much advanced. My father had procured four waggon and several teams of stout oxen, which were

considered more suitable than horses for traversing the prairies, as being hardier and better able to go a long distance without water. My father, Mr Tidey, and I had a horse a-piece, and Uncle Denis would, of course, bring his own with probably half-a-dozen more for some of the men.

Martin Prentis was to remain with the purchaser of the property; indeed, without his assistance, Mr McDermont would have been badly off. Our overseer promised, however, when his services were not required, to join us.

Three days after our return Uncle Denis arrived, bringing with him several white men, among whom was his overseer, and two blacks, slaves whom he had emancipated with the promise that they should labour for him until they had paid the price of their freedom. "We shall see whether they prove faithful or not," he remarked, as he described his arrangements. Besides them Uncle Denis was accompanied by his overseer, who, not being required on the farm, was in search of employment. Greatly to our satisfaction, just as we were on the point of starting, Martin Prentis came forward and offered to give up his situation to Uncle Denis's overseer, Tom Sykes, if Tom would take it, and Mr McDermont would agree to the arrangement. This he did, and it was settled that Martin should accompany us, so that altogether we formed a pretty large, well-armed party. We all had rifles, and a brace of pistols, besides long knives in our belts, and my father and Uncle Denis wore their swords.

Our uncle's followers, including Sam Hodding, his factotum, were sturdy fellows, and if some of them were not very bright, they were all, he said, as true as steel, while he believed that the two blacks, influenced by gratitude, would prove perfectly faithful.

He brought word that Mr Bracher was said to be very ill. We suspected that he was suffering from a wound he had received while attacking our house. There was some fear, should he hear of our intended departure, that he might for the purpose of revenging himself, send a party to follow us up and attack us while on the move.

"Never fear, friends," said Mr McDermont, when the subject was spoken of, "I'll keep an eye on the proceedings of the gentleman, and if I hear of any suspicious characters going in the direction you are travelling, I'll dodge their steps and come to your assistance. They'll not follow you far, if they follow at all, so I don't think that you need have much fear of being troubled by them."

We exchanged kind farewells with our new friend, and not without many a regret at leaving Uphill commenced our march. We all knew that it would be a toilsome one and not free from danger, but my father had determined, that as he was moving he would move far west, where the curse of slavery was unknown.

The waggons I have mentioned were of a stronger build than those before described. They had high tilts which made them comfortable sleeping-places at night. My father and Uncle Denis rode alongside the leading waggon, in which my mother, Kathleen, Biddy, and Rose travelled, and Dan condescended when tired to take his seat with them. Martin Prentis drove the first, Sam Hodding the second, Peter the third, and some of our other men the rest. Mr Tidey and I brought up the rear.

For some days we kept Dio inside, lest he might be recognised and an attempt made to carry him off. Boxer and Toby generally scampered on ahead, coming back every now and then, and giving a loud bark as if to hurry on the train.

We moved but at a slow pace, for although the patient oxen could travel on for many miles without growing weary, it was impossible to make them advance out of a steady walk. We proceeded northward, having the mighty Mississippi on our left, until we reached the banks of the Illinois river, which we crossed in flat-bottomed boats, and then proceeding several days' journey westward, entered the wide prairies of Missouri, the vast river from which the state takes its name being to the south of us. We were now truly in the wilderness, but "Westward Ho!" was our cry. We had numerous dangers to guard against; prairie fires might occur and envelope us in their deadly embrace; hostile Indians might attack us and attempt to carry off our cattle during the night: when crossing rivers floods might come down and overwhelm us; or packs of fierce wolves might seize any of our oxen straying from the neighbourhood of the camp; but the fear of such contingencies did not deter my father and uncle, who had made up their minds to move on until they could find a region suited to their taste. Many had done the same and failed, others had succeeded, and they hoped to be ranked among the latter.

Our mode of camping at night, having reached a spot near water, was, to form a square with our waggons, leaving an opening through which the cattle might be driven in case of an attack; if close to a broad and deep stream, the water served for one side and the camp could thus be made of larger size. The fires were lighted in the centre, and two or more men were

always posted outside to give due notice of the approach of a foe. We had brought a tent for my mother and Kathleen, which was of course pitched inside the square, that they might enjoy more room than their waggon afforded, although that was made as comfortable as circumstances would permit for sitting in during the day-time. In case of being attacked by Indians, the goods in the waggons would serve, we hoped, as protection against their arrows or even the bullets of those possessed of fire-arms.

We always did our best to reach a spot of this description before sunset. Our first duty was to water the horses and cattle, then to hobble the former. This was done by fastening the fore and hind-legs on one side with an iron chain, a leathern strap passing round the fetlock. They were then turned loose to graze, their instinct inducing them, provided there was plenty of grass, to remain close to the camp. We then set to work to get wood for our fires, after filling the kettles with water; the salt meat was then put on to boil, or when we had game, that was spitted and placed on forked sticks to roast. We each of us had our various duties to attend to, some made up the beds with blankets and buffalo robes; one man roasted the coffee berries in a frying-pan and prepared them for boiling in a primitive fashion by wrapping them in a piece of buffalo or deer-skin and pounding them with the back of a hatchet.

As soon as the coffee was boiled and the meat cooked we all turned to with good appetites, our mother, Kathleen, Bidley, and Rose, seating themselves on some of the lighter packages, which were taken from the waggons for the purpose.

After a few days' travelling we got so accustomed to the style of life we were leading, that having encountered no serious difficulties we began to hope that the dangers we had heard of were more imaginary than real, and that we should after all perform our journey with ease and safety. Silas Bracher had either received no notice of our departure, or he did not suppose that Dio was with us, for we had travelled a hundred miles or more northward without seeing any of his people. Mr Tidey and I, however, as we rode in the rear, kept a look-out for them; and had they come up with our train they would have found us well prepared to give them a warm reception. It was satisfactory, however, at length to believe that there was no risk of an encounter with them.

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## Chapter Six.

**Dan's eagerness for adventures—Mosquitos—A tempest brewing—The storm upon us—Rising of the river—The flood—A fearful flash—Dio takes the lead—A miserable night—Strangers in camp—Rumours of Indians—Following up the trail—The plundered emigrant train—The wolves—A prairie flower—Alone in the deserted camp—New dangers—A surprise for my mother—The halt—Graves by the wayside—The only records of the slain—"Lily's mother sleeps here."**

"I say, Mike, I thought by this time that we should have fought half a dozen battles with the redskins, killed no end of buffalo and deer, unkennelled black bears and grizzlies without number, and trapped beavers and racoons and 'possums by scores!" exclaimed Dan, as we were seated round our camp-fire.

"Wait a bit, my boy, until we get farther on our journey," remarked Mr Tidey, who overheard Dan, "we shall have adventures enough then to satisfy you, and enable Mike to fill up his journal to overflowing, though, for my part, I confess I shall be very glad, as I suspect will be your father and mother, if we get through without them."

"Not much chance of that," I observed, "or we shall be an exception to the general rule. I hope, however, if we do meet with hostile Indians, that we may be able to beat them off. Martin Prentis, who has been a good deal among them, says that they are arrant cowards, and will only attack people when they find them unprepared."

We were, I should have said, encamped in our usual fashion, near a stream, that we might obtain as much water as we required. Along the bank was a belt of trees with a copse, which afforded us a supply of fire-wood. The weather had been exceedingly hot, and scarcely had we halted than we had to encounter an enemy for which we had not bargained. Swarms of mosquitos attacked us the moment we left the protecting smoke of the fire, buzzing round our heads in countless numbers, stinging our faces and hands and such parts of our legs and ankles as were exposed. Fortunately my mother had some mosquito curtains, within which she and Kathleen obtained shelter at night, though we who had no means of resisting their assaults were so stung that we could scarcely recognise each other.

"In my opinion we shall have a storm before long," observed Martin Prentis, "the way these creatures bite is a pretty sure sign of what is going to happen."

Not long after he had made the remark, on looking up at the sky I saw a thick mass of clouds sweeping across it, the stars rapidly disappearing. Suddenly the whole horizon was lighted up with flashes of brilliant flame and reiterated peals of thunder burst forth with fearful loudness. There was, however, but little wind, and as yet no rain had fallen. As Martin had advised, my father had the tilts of the waggons carefully secured with additional ropes over them, as he had also my mother's tent. The storm drew nearer and nearer. The lightning had hitherto been at a distance, but now thick bars of fire darted through the air, remaining visible for many seconds, zigzagging backwards and forwards before they reached the ground, along which they went hissing like fiery serpents, sometimes striking into it with loud crashes. Again for a minute or two all seemed darkness, then once more the whole heaven was illuminated, the thunder all the time roaring and rattling, now coming from one direction, now from another. Our terrified horses rushed up to the camp seeking protection, although the more stolid oxen appeared indifferent to the uproar. Hitherto the air had been calm. Suddenly a fierce blast swept across the plain, shaking the awnings of the waggons, and threatening to bear them off bodily, or tear them to pieces. Scarcely had the blast struck the camp, than down came the rain. My mother and Kathleen rushed hurriedly into their tent, followed at their invitation by Biddy and Rose, while we sought such shelter as the waggons could afford. That was rain, and not only rain but hail, each piece of ice the size of a pigeon's egg, some even larger. The rain fell in no small drops, but in sheets of water, and soon converted our camp into a pond, the spot on which my mother's tent stood happily forming an island. With the crashing of the thunder, the roar of the wind, and the fierce pattering of the rain, we could scarcely hear each other speak. We were thankful that we had already encamped before the storm came on. Hour after hour it raged without giving any sign of diminution. I was seated alongside Uncle Denis, wrapped up in a buffalo robe in one of the waggons nearest to the river, which we could occasionally see by stretching out our necks beyond the canvas as the flashes of lightning darted across it.

"Mike, does it strike you that the water has risen higher than it was when we first encamped? Watch for the next flash, and tell me what you think."



I did as he directed me.

"It seems to me almost up to the top of the bank," I answered.

"I hope it won't come higher, then," he said, "for if it does, we shall have to harness up, and seek for a more elevated position to spend the remainder of the night, though it won't be pleasant to have to move while the storm lasts."

Again looking out, and waiting for another flash, it appeared to me that the water had not only risen to the bank, but had overflowed. It was meandering in various channels over the ground.

I told my uncle, who watched as I had done, until he was convinced in another few minutes that our camp would be completely flooded. He shouted out to my father, who agreed with him. Our first care was to get my mother and Kathleen, with their attendants, into their waggon, and to wrap them up as well as we could. We then, calling to the men, hurried out, splashing over the wet ground, while the rain came like a shower-bath down on our heads, to catch the oxen and harness them up. It was no easy matter to find the animals, as it was only when the lightning flashed forth that we could distinguish them, so pitchy dark was the night. First one team was caught, then another and another, we all shouting at the top of our voices to make ourselves heard. There was no time to be lost; already the water was almost up to the axles. At length, however, we got the oxen harnessed and the horses saddled. First one waggon was drawn out, and then another, but it took some time before all were ready to move forward. The next point to be considered was the direction to take. We might possibly only find ourselves on lower ground, and consequently in deeper water. My father and Uncle Denis, who had mounted their horses, rode forward, telling us to keep shouting, that they might find us again. The lightning continued flashing as before, so that we could see them for a short time as they rode away. My father had directed me to move on in as straight a line as we could keep at right angles from the river, and by turning round I could occasionally get a view of the trees which fringed its banks, showing me that we were as nearly as possible keeping the course he wished. Still I felt very anxious. I had remembered passing along a deep gully which would in all probability be full of water, and before we were aware of it the leading oxen might tumble in, and perhaps drag the waggon after them. I told Martin and another man to go to their heads and feel the way with poles, while the rest of the waggons kept as close as possible one behind the other. The drivers, however,

finding the water rising, could with difficulty be induced to follow my orders. Behind us we could hear the sound of the rushing waters as the swollen river swept along, and at intervals the voices of the men driving the rear waggons reached my ears, shouting to us to move faster. We were thus advancing cautiously when I caught sight of a dark object rising up almost before me and apparently reaching to the sky. It was a tree, but in the darkness it seemed of gigantic proportions.

At that moment a vivid flash darted from the clouds, a loud explosion followed with a deafening crash, and the stout trunk was rent asunder, the branches falling on every side, the leading oxen narrowly escaping being crushed. I should have been swept off my frightened horse had he not sprang forward, trembling in every limb. The flash revealed to me one of the gullies I had been anxious to avoid. I shouted to the other men to keep clear of the danger. At the same time a dread seized me lest my father and Uncle Denis might have ridden into it, and have been carried away by the boiling current.

The men replied that they could not see their way, and from the cries which reached me it was evident that the whole train was in confusion. The roar of the waters drowned our voices. At that moment another flash showed me a figure close by my side and I caught the words—

“Me show de way, dare high ground little ahead, come ‘long.”

It was Dio, who had leapt from the waggon in which he had been seated and had come to the front, the post of danger. Endowed with a keener eyesight than the rest of us, during darkness he had distinguished the ground which we had failed to see. The leading waggon followed him, and we were soon assured that the ground was rising. Though this was the case, it might again sink and we should be in a worse position than before. I was greatly relieved when I heard a shout in reply to ours and could distinguish the figures of my father and Uncle Denis against the sky. They had found a spot, not likely to be reached by the water they believed, where we could camp for the remainder of the night. They led us to it along the ridge we had gained, avoiding a deep dip, into which, had we descended, we should have been worse off than before. Of course we were all wet to the skin; but, while the rain poured down in bucketfuls as it was doing, we could light no fire to dry our clothes. Still we were thankful that we had escaped the danger which had threatened us, and we managed to place our waggons in the usual position, so that at daylight we might be prepared for enemies should any appear. When morning broke

we had reason to be grateful to Heaven that we had moved away in time from the bank of the river, for the ground on which we had encamped was covered with water to the depth apparently of several feet, while the current swept by with a force sufficient to have carried our waggon and cattle away. As the day advanced, the storm ceased, the clouds rolled off and the sun burst forth, his warm rays soon drying our clothes and the wet tilts of the waggon.

The flood had so completely obliterated the trail, that my father and uncle deemed it prudent either to ride on ahead themselves, or to send Mr Tidey and me forward to ascertain the proper route to take. They had gone on in the morning where the road was more difficult, and after our mid-day stoppage the Dominie and I took the lead. In all directions were traces of the storm, trees uprooted, the streams flooded, the ground being covered with broken branches of trees and occasionally we came across the bodies of animals which had been caught by the current and drowned.

As the day was drawing to a close we were looking out for a spot on which to camp for the night. As I gazed ahead I saw some objects moving across the plain.

"Can those be Indians?" I asked, pointing them out to Mr Tidey; "if so, they may be Sioux or Blackfeet and give us some trouble."

He reined up his horse, and, shading his eyes with his hand, gazed at them steadily. "No, that's a waggon, and coming this way too," he answered, "they may be emigrants who have turned back either because they have been frightened by Indians, or having lost some of their cattle by the floods have found it impossible to proceed; supposing the latter to be the case, they appear to be coming on very rapidly."

"They seem to me to be running away from enemies," I observed, "however, we shall soon know."

"At all events we must try to select our camping-ground before they come up, or they may occupy it," answered Mr Tidey, "there is a stream to the right bordered by trees. It is just the spot we want. Ride back, Mike, and hurry on the waggon. We shall have formed our camp before the strangers arrive."

While Mr Tidey rode in the direction towards which he pointed, I galloped back and gave notice of the approach of a train from the westward. I had observed an easy pass among the hills

which led down to the stream, and through it I was able to guide our waggons. We reached the ground selected by Mr Tidey in good time to camp before dark, and our arrangements had just been concluded when the strangers approached. As they drew near, my father and I went to meet them, to show them a spot near ours where they might encamp. Two men, seeing us coming, advanced towards us: one of them was a sturdy, strong, bold fellow, but the other had nothing of the backwoodsman about him in appearance.

"Glad to fall in with you, strangers," said the first; "and if you follow my advice, you will turn back with us, unless you wish to have your scalps taken by the Indians or your cattle drowned by the floods, or if you escape them, to die of hunger and thirst as you travel over the desert to the westward, though it's my opinion you'll never get many days journey from this."

"Your report, friend, is not very encouraging," answered my father, "though, as I am prepared to encounter some difficulty, I cannot promise to follow your advice; however, as we shall spend the evening together we shall hear more of what you have gone through. To save you time, we looked out for a spot for your camp. You cannot do better than occupy it."

The stranger thanked us. "Whereabouts is it?" he asked.

"It is a little to the westward of where our waggons are drawn up."

"I'd rather go further east," said the stranger when he saw it, "and place you between ourselves and the redskins. We've had one battle already, and to say the truth have no stomachs for another. You may take your turn next, should they come, and I am not certain that they will not before daybreak."

"You are welcome to camp where you like," answered my father, amused at the stranger's cowardice, of which he did not seem at all ashamed; "we shall look to you, however, to help us in driving back the redskins if they make their appearance."

We, however, assisted the strangers in finding a suitable spot a little to the eastward of our camp, and in a short time they drew up their waggons on it.

As soon as we had finished supper my father and Uncle Denis and I went over to the strangers' camp, to hear a further account of their proceedings.

The story they gave of the dangers they had encountered was sufficiently alarming to make persons less determined than my father and uncle give up the expedition they had undertaken. They had narrowly escaped being carried away by a flood the previous evening, and had been only the day before surrounded by a body of Indians, with whom, as it turned out, they had only exchanged shots, when the redskins had retreated without blood being shed. They mentioned, however, another train of four or five waggons which had been some way ahead of them, and told us that they had considerable apprehensions as to their fate.

"We will hope for the best," said my father, "if the people are prudent and keep a careful watch, I believe they may easily beat off any Indians of these parts, who never attack white men unless they can take them by surprise."

We did our best to persuade our new acquaintances to turn back once more with us, but they had so completely lost heart that nothing we could say had any effect.

"No, no, friend," answered their leader, "we committed a folly in leaving our comfortable farm in Ohio. We have made up our minds to be wiser in future, and look out for another location eastward, beyond the reach of the Indians. If you are wise, you will do the same."

"From my experience I should say that we are as likely to be annoyed by white men as the redskins, and by treating the latter honestly I hope that we shall gain their friendship and have no cause to dread them," said my father.

"You'll act as you judge best, but I have warned you of what you may have to expect," was the answer.

We parted the next morning with mutual expressions of good will, and while the returning emigrants hurried off eastward, we continued our course to the west, the marks made by their waggon wheels enabling us to proceed rapidly until we reached the spot where they had encamped the previous night. Here the truth of their story was corroborated by the appearance of Indian trails which led away westward. We encamped a little further on, and of course kept a careful watch at night, but no enemy appeared.

Next afternoon Mr Tidey and I were riding ahead followed by Boxer and another of our dogs—without whom indeed, we never left the camp, as they were sure to give us timely warning

should any Indians be lurking around. We knew, however, that they would not attack the red-men, of whom they seemed to have an instinctive dread, but would silently slink close to us, should any enemies be near. We were looking out, as may be supposed, for Indian trails, as well as for those of the other emigrant train of which we had heard, when we saw signs on the ground which at first puzzled us. We dismounted to examine them more carefully.

"If we had an Indian guide, he would quickly tell us what they mean," observed the Dominie. "See, here are oxen and wheel tracks, and these are the marks of moccasins. I suspect that a party of Indians out on the war-path have followed the waggons, and I fear after all that the emigrants were not so far wrong in their conjectures as we supposed. I only hope the people on ahead have kept a careful watch and beaten back their wily foe."

"Let us push on, and try to overtake the Indians before they attack the train," I said. "When they see another party of white men approaching, they may judge it prudent to give up their enterprise; and if they pursue us, our fast horses will enable us easily to keep out of their way."

The Dominie, though not blind to the risk we might run, agreed to my proposal; the ground was open and level, and there was no brushwood either to the right or left which might conceal a lurking foe. We accordingly put our horses into a gallop, believing that we should soon come up with the train, or get sight of the Indians, should they still be following it. "The redskins will be looking ahead, and will not discover us until we have seen them," I observed.

Suddenly the dogs, which had been keeping alongside us, dashed forward, just at the moment that we, from the unevenness of the ground, were compelled to pull up. On reaching the summit of one of the undulations rather than hills, which rise in different parts of the prairie, we saw some objects in the distance which we both agreed must be waggons. As we got nearer we saw that two were upset, and that from a third smoke was ascending, while from another the tilt had been torn off, one only remaining intact.

"That must be the train we are in search of," observed the Dominie; "it has too evidently been attacked by the Indians; but I see no one moving about. Perhaps the savages caught sight of us, and supposing that we were at the head of a large party, have gone off. We may be in time to help some of the poor

people, if any have escaped with their lives, though I fear the worst, as the redskins seldom leave their work half finished, and the chances are that all the white men have been killed."

We rode forward as fast as the rugged nature of the ground would allow, prepared at any moment to wheel round and gallop back should we catch sight of the savages.

We hoped, however, as the dogs did not return, that we should have no trouble on that account. We were still at some distance from the waggons, when we heard a loud yelping and barking.

"Those sounds came from a pack of wolves," exclaimed Mr Tidey; "I see the brutes, they are calling to each other, expecting to enjoy a banquet on the dead bodies of the slain."

Directly afterwards we caught sight of the animals making their way through the brushwood and trees which surrounded the waggons. Above their hideous yelps we could distinguish the deep honest bark of our own dogs. Forgetting for the moment the risk we ran of being surprised, we put spurs to our horses, and galloping over the uneven ground soon got up to the spot. Neither cattle nor horses were visible, they had evidently been carried off. The scene which soon met our eyes filled us with horror.

On the ground lay half-a-dozen men, each of whom had been scalped and their bodies partly stripped. Farther on were two or three more, who had fallen between the waggons. Some of the wolves, more daring than their companions, had advanced at the head of the pack, and would already have commenced the horrible repast had not our two noble dogs, barking furiously, kept them at bay.

"I am afraid we are too late here to be of any use except to bury the dead," observed Mr Tidey as we surveyed the melancholy scene. "But holloa! what is that among the bushes? A woman,—I see her moving. Perhaps we may be in time to save her."

Forgetting that the Indians might still be at hand, we dismounted, and fastening our horses to the wheels of one of the waggons, made our way through the brushwood. As we did so, a couple of wolves approached from an opposite direction, and were on the point of seizing the woman's body, when Boxer and his companion springing forward, they took to flight. We hurried to the assistance of the poor woman. We now saw that

it was not she who had moved, but a little girl whose arms were thrown round her.

"Oh! come help Lily!" exclaimed the child, at once recognising us as white men: "look up mother! oh, mother, mother! speak to Lily, one word. White man come to help you, no fear now."

In vain, however, Lily called to her mother. While I took the child in my arms, Mr Tidey knelt down by the side of the poor lady. The blood which flowed from her breast, and dyed the ground on which she lay, too plainly told that she had received a mortal wound.

"She is beyond our help," he said; "but I would prevent her body being devoured by these abominable brutes. Do you carry the child, and I will convey the poor mother into the nearest waggon. We can cover her up sufficiently to prevent the wolves getting at her until we return, when we can bury her decently, as well as the rest of the murdered people."

I did as he advised, and was making my way to where we had left the horses, when I heard a loud explosion, and fragments of all sorts came whizzing through the air: mercifully none of them struck me. I looked round, and was thankful to see Mr Tidey safe. I had forgotten the waggon which we had seen burning. The horses, terrified by the sound, reared and plunged, and broke their bridles. The Dominie, letting the body fall, rushed after his horse; fortunately catching it, he galloped after mine in the direction from which we had come, and I found myself standing alone in the midst of the blackened train, with the little girl clinging to my neck and crying bitterly for her mother to speak to her, while the wolves, driven to a distance by the explosion, howled and yelped around me, though kept from again approaching by the gallant dogs and the shouts I raised for the purpose of keeping them at bay.

I felt that I was in a fearful position. At any moment the savages might return, in the hopes of obtaining more plunder. I had my rifle, and I determined to defend the little girl and myself to the last. A new danger arose: the waggon was burning furiously; the flames might ignite the others, which in all probability also contained kegs of powder, and it was more than likely that the grass would be set on fire and the whole prairie would be in a blaze. Not only should I and my young companion lose our lives, but my friends would be exposed to the most fearful danger. I must endeavour, I saw, to make some effort to prevent the catastrophe; but I had not the heart to force the little girl's arms from around my neck, and to place



her on the ground. I endeavoured to tranquillise her by every means I could think of. At last I bethought me of placing her in the only waggon which remained upright.

"Stay quiet there, Lily," I observed; "no one will hurt you, and I will come back as soon as possible. I want to try and put out that fire, or it will do us harm."

"Don't leave me, don't leave me," cried Lily; but as she did not resist. I placed her in the waggon, and begged her to be quiet, while I seized a long stick which lay on the ground, and rushing up to the fire, beat out the flames which already rose from the grass. Mercifully it was not so thick there as in other places a short distance off. I rushed round and round the burning mass, now and then being just in time to reach a snake-like line of flame which was extending towards the brushwood or in the direction of the tall grass, which, had it gained, nothing could have stopped the dreaded catastrophe. I was thus engaged when I heard a loud holloa! For a moment I thought the Indians were upon me, but on looking up, I saw Mr Tidey, leading my horse and followed by Uncle Denis. They were soon up to me, and leaping from their steeds, without stopping to ask questions, commenced stamping out the smouldering fire, which a sudden puff of wind might soon have raised again into a flame. Not until they had succeeded in overcoming the threatened danger did they speak a word. Uncle Denis then told me that they had heard the report; and fearing that we might be exposed to danger, he had galloped forward to ascertain the cause, leaving the waggons under the command of my father, who had made every preparation for resistance in case they should be attacked by the Indians. He had seen Mr Tidey catch my horse, and had been very anxious lest some accident should have befallen me. A few words served to explain what had happened, and I then hurried back to poor little Lily.

"We are safe now, Lily," I said, "and you must come with me. Do you think you could sit on my horse, while we gallop over the ground?"

"Oh yes, Lily often used to sit on Uncle John's horse. I not afraid," she answered. "But mother, where is mother?"

"That other man will take care of her," I answered evasively. "Come, I want to carry you to friends; I've got a little sister, who would be so glad to see you, and so will my mother. She, I know, will take care of you."

"Lily will go with you," she answered.

Mounting my horse, I called to Uncle Denis to place Lily in front of me on the saddle.

"Go on, Mike," he said; "we will do as Mr Tidey proposed with the poor lady, and follow close behind you. The sooner we rejoin the waggons the better, for one can never tell what tricks the redskins may play us. Tell your father that I think he had better camp as soon as he can find a suitable spot."

I did not stop for further directions, but rode off as fast as I could venture to go, holding Lily tightly with my right arm round her waist before me. I very naturally, as I rode along, kept a look-out on either side, half expecting to see a party of Indians creeping forward to cut me off. I was thankful when I caught sight of the waggons approaching with my father at their head. His astonishment at beholding my young companion was very great. I stopped but for a moment to tell him what had occurred. He ordered the waggons to halt, that I might give Lily over to my mother. She and Kathleen uttered exclamations of surprise at seeing the little girl, while Dio, who was on foot, ran forward and lifted her into the waggon.

"This is my mother, Lily," I said, "and my little sister Kathleen; I am sure they will be kind and love you very much."

"That we will," said my mother, as Lily, looking up in her face, smiled faintly; but she had been too much frightened to speak. As I left her in my mother's arms I whispered—

"I will tell you by-and-by how I found her, but don't ask her any questions now, mother." I made a sign, which I think she understood, to show her that something very dreadful had occurred.

Without stopping further, I returned to my father, to whom I gave my uncle's message, and as we rode along I told him what had happened. We had not got far when Mr Tidey and Uncle Denis arrived. I saw that both my uncle and the Dominie looked unusually anxious. Just as they were starting they had caught sight of two figures in the distance, which they had no doubt were Indians who had been watching them; they were convinced, moreover, that should an opportunity occur, the savages would attack our camp.

We pushed on accordingly as fast as we could move, until we got within about a mile of the place where the emigrants' train had been destroyed. It was the first spot suitable for camping. Situated in a slight hollow, four or five hundred yards wide, a

deep and pretty broad stream flowing on the north side, with a small wood or copse to the east, while to the west and south the ground sloped upwards and then fell again down to the scene of the catastrophe. We lost no time in unyoking the oxen and placing the waggons in a square, taking even more than usual precautions against an attack. As there was plenty of grass round, we tethered both the cattle and horses close outside the waggons, while three men were told off to keep watch on the top of the ridge, whence we could obtain a wide view over the country. We swept it again and again with our telescopes but could discover no persons moving in the distance. We both saw and heard, however, the horrible wolves, who only waited for nightfall to rush in again on the emigrants' camp.

"I don't like the thought of allowing those poor fellows to be devoured by the brutes," said Uncle Denis. "What do you say, Tidey? Will you accompany me, and try to bury them decently? We will go on horseback, and by keeping a bright look-out, there will be no risk of being surprised by the redskins, should they venture to return. I should like especially to pay all the respect we can to that poor lady."

"With all my heart," answered the Dominie, "and if the captain agrees, we will take Martin and Dio."

"And I'll go too," I said, "if my father will allow me."

As he did not object, we immediately mounted our horses, Uncle Denis and the Dominie each carrying a spade, and the two men a pickaxe a-piece, while Boxer and Toby followed at our heels. As we galloped over the ground, we were not long in reaching the scene of the massacre. Dio, who had the sharpest eyes amongst us, was stationed to keep a look-out, while we, securing our horses, at once set about our melancholy task. We selected a spot under the branches of a wide-spreading oak for the grave of the poor lady. As the ground was soft it was soon dug. We then carried the body to it. We were on the point of placing it in, when the Dominie suggested that we should take off her wedding-ring and any ornament about her, that they might be given to her daughter, and that they might also serve to identify her, so that should we have an opportunity we might inform her relatives and friends of her fate. Besides the plain gold ring, was another of curious workmanship with an amethyst set in it, while secured round her neck by a silk ribbon Uncle Denis discovered a gold locket. Without stopping to examine it he placed it in his pouch. In the waggon were a few articles for family use, but we found nothing of value. No

letters; no pocket-book which might serve to tell us who she was; everything had been carried off by the savages. Her husband, probably, was among the murdered men; and if we could find his body, we would, we agreed, place it in the grave of his wife.

"That's more than we are likely to do," answered Uncle Denis; "let the poor lady rest alone."

Accordingly, lifting her up, we placed her in the narrow grave, and although she was a stranger to me, I confess that I burst into tears as we hurriedly threw the earth over her. Martin had in the meantime commenced a larger grave for the men. Had they been our most intimate friends, we should have been unable to recognise them, so fearfully had their countenances been disfigured by the savages. The bodies too had been partly stripped, so that there was little difference in their dress to help us. In vain we endeavoured to ascertain which was the husband of the poor lady, and we had no time to devote to a close examination. We were not long in digging a shallow grave and burying the murdered men side by side.

"We must place some logs over the poor lady's grave," said Uncle Denis, "so that we may know it again."

Mr Tidey agreed, and all of us plying our axes, we managed to pile up a number of logs over the spot. Three fallen trees lay near the larger grave and these we dragged over it, so as to prevent the wolves from disturbing the dead. Dio had in the meantime been riding backward and forwards, shouting out whenever he saw any of the brutes approaching: he was assisted by our two brave dogs, who kept up a constant barking, showing that they understood the duty required of them.

The sun had already set, and as the Indians, should they have been watching us in the distance, might creep up during the darkness, we mounted our horses and rode back as quickly as we could to the camp. My first inquiry was for Lily. She had been crying bitterly for her mother, asking when she would come to her, but had at length fallen asleep, and was now resting inside the tent in Kathleen's bed.

While seated round the camp-fire an idea came into my head, I procured a piece of board, and with my knife commenced carving an inscription. This I intended fixing the next morning on to the logs above the lady's grave. It was a question whether I should have an opportunity of erecting it. We might possibly

be attacked by an overwhelming body of Indians and have to retreat, or perchance share the fate of the unfortunate people we had buried. As may be supposed, we kept an anxious watch, although there was less chance of our being attacked in the camp than while moving on, as the redskins, in spite of their vaunted bravery, always watch for an opportunity of taking their enemies by surprise, and finding us prepared for them, would probably keep at a distance. Having stood my watch during the early part of the night, I turned in and lay down with my buffalo robe by the side of Dan. I was awakened by my father's voice arousing the camp. In an instant every one was on foot, fires were made up, and a hurried breakfast taken. We then caught and yoked the oxen, and in the grey of morning recommenced our march. Uncle Denis and the Dominie, acting as scouts, rode a little way in advance on either side, so as to avoid the risk of a surprise. My mother kept little Lily in her arms inside the waggon, so that she could not see the wrecked train. As we approached it Uncle Denis and I galloped forward to the grave of the poor lady, I carrying the board on which I had worked the previous evening. Throwing ourselves from our horses, we nailed it to the large log placed over the head. On the board I had carved, with the date of her death, "Lily's mother sleeps here."

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## **Chapter Seven.**

**Across the plains—The march of civilisation—A halt—The trail discovered—On the war-path—An obstacle—Arrival at the river—Examining the camping-ground—An inaccessible point—Erecting fortifications—The way trees are felled in Kentucky—Strengthening our position—Mr Tidey puts us on the alert—Red-skin daring—Round the camp-fire—Evident anxiety of my father and the Dominie—Our strong point—Setting the watch—Driving in the cattle—The lull before the storm.**

The next day's journey was an anxious one. We had no doubt that the Indians were watching us, lurking behind trees or shrubs, although they did not show themselves. My father directed that all the horses should be mounted, the men only required to conduct the waggon remaining on foot. The formidable appearance we thus presented undoubtedly prevented our enemies from approaching, still we felt sure that

should they find an opportunity of attacking us with advantage, they would be down upon us. In a few days we hoped to reach one of the numerous forts scattered over the continent for the protection of the white men, advancing in constant streams to take possession of the fertile lands to the westward, which had hitherto served only as the hunting-grounds of the red-men. It is not surprising that the so-called savages looked with no friendly eye on the intruders, or should have taken every opportunity of destroying them, in the vain hope of preventing other following in the same direction. The idea, however, that we were intruders did not occur to my father, or to the thousands of other emigrants who were leaving the Eastern States with the object of forming homes for themselves and families in the desert. They saw unlimited tracks of a fertile country stretched out before them without an inhabitant, and they looked upon the savage red man much in the same light as they looked upon the herds of buffalo which roam over the prairies. We had halted for our mid-day rest, without having seen any Indians, though we kept a vigilant look-out on every side. We began to hope therefore, that, content with the plunder they had obtained, they had returned with it to their villages, and that we should reach the fort without being molested. Still my father was too good a soldier not to keep as constant a watch as before. As we expected when we arrived at the fort to remain some days, there would be time for our cattle and horses to rest; we therefore agreed to push on across the prairie faster than we had hitherto done, though of course we should be guided as to our camping-places by the necessary requirements of water, grass, and wood for fuel. We might thus have to halt earlier in the day than we wished, or continue on later in the evening. The latter alternative it was important, if possible, to avoid, as should any Indians be in the neighbourhood they might attack us. The only means of averting the danger of being surprised while on the move, was to scout at a greater range than usual, so as to discover any lurking foes. While travelling I was seldom able to exchange a word with my mother and Kathleen, but as soon as we halted, I went to the waggon to inquire how little Lily was getting on. She at once recognised me.

"Have you found mother? is she coming back to Lily soon?" she asked. I pointed to my mother and then to Kathleen.

"She will be your mother, and Kathleen will be your sister," I answered; "they will love you very much, as I told you."

"Yes, they are very kind to Lily, they love Lily I know," she said, giving Kathleen a kiss.

"You shall be my new sister; I am so glad to have one," said Kathleen, returning her embrace.

Lily smiled, and I knew that though she might not forget her own mother, she would soon be happy with those who were so anxious to treat her kindly. Still I observed that she every now and then gave a startled look around, showing that she had not forgotten the scene she had witnessed on the previous day. I hoped for her sake as well as for that of all of us, that she would never again be exposed to so fearful a danger.

I should have said that Uncle Denis had given my mother the locket and rings belonging to the murdered lady.

"You will take better care of them than I can," he said, and he drew them out of his pouch wrapped in a piece of buck skin, and handed them to her without looking at them. "When the little girl is old enough you can give them to her, and tell her how they were obtained: she will long before that have forgotten all about the circumstances."

My mother, not having time to examine them, put them carefully in a bag containing cherished treasures of her own.

We had scarcely halted two hours, when my father's voice was heard, ordering the men to prepare for moving on. The oxen were soon yoked to, the horses saddled, and we continued our journey across the boundless plain.

It was my turn to scout ahead with Mr Tidey. My father had charged us not to go so far as to run the risk of being cut off from the train. We therefore frequently halted, especially when we gained the summit of any of the slight elevations which are frequently met with on the prairie. I was a short distance ahead when I saw some marks on the ground which I fancied must be the trail of buffaloes. I waited until my companion came up, when I pointed them out to him.

"That's an Indian trail," he said, as he carefully examined the marks. "See, there are three paths close together at fixed distances apart. I will tell you how they are produced. The framework of their lodges are made, as you know, of long poles. These on a journey are tied to each side of a pony, the ends trailing on the ground. It is very evident from the way the grass is trampled down, that a long line of ponies has passed

this way, one following the other. The centre line, which is deepest, you see, is caused by the feet of the ponies and the two outer lines by the trailing of the poles over the ground. There must have been women and children with them, which is satisfactory, as it shows that although the party was a large one, they were not out on the war-path. They were going northward, crossing our course; whether the men who attacked the emigrant train belong to them or not, it is hard to say; perhaps they were the braves of another tribe, and those whose trail we see were escaping from them."

"You read the marks as well as an Indian could do," I observed; "and I have no doubt that you are right."

"I have given my mind to the subject, and the man who improves his opportunities in these wilds can soon attain the knowledge possessed by the redskins. I have met with many white trappers and hunters who were fully equal to the most sagacious Indian scouts."

"What do you advise then?" I asked.

"That we should proceed straight on, as we are going, and keep as strict a watch at night and as bright a look-out during the day as heretofore. The poor fellows who have been massacred must have been very careless, and allowed themselves to be deceived by the Indians. It was evidently an act of treachery, and I should say that a party of the Indians made their way into the camp on some pretence or other, probably of trading, and suddenly attacked their too confiding hosts. I observed that none of the white men had been killed by bullets or arrows, and it is likely that the poor lady lost her life by a stray shot from one of her own party."

"We had better let my father and Uncle Denis know that we have seen the trails, and they will judge what is best to be done," I observed.

"Ride back then, Mike, and tell them what I advise," answered Mr Tidey; "I will continue to look out ahead. Just say that I think it possible that another war-party may be pursuing the tribe whose trail we have seen, and disappointed at not overtaking them, that they may make an attempt on our camp, or venture to attack us on the march."

I accordingly galloped back, looking as I did so to the southward, as it was from that direction the war-party might, I thought, appear. I however saw no human beings moving in the



distance, but I caught sight of a herd of deer, and greatly longed to be able to go in chase, as we were much in want of fresh provisions. We had intended to halt for the purpose of hunting, but the risk of falling in with enemies made my father deem it prudent not to allow any one to go to a distance from the camp. I soon got back to the waggons, and reported what Mr Tidey had said.

"We will follow his advice," said my father, "and if Indians appear, we may, I hope, send them to the right-about. We will at all events take good care not to allow any strangers to enter our camp, or to come within range of our rifles while we are on the march. Now go, Mike, to the support of Mr Tidey; but keep in sight, and fall back should you see any Indians approaching."

I was soon up with the Dominie. "If all travellers were as cautious as your father, the redskins would not so often succeed," he observed.

We were now crossing an elevated plateau with slightly undulating ground in the far distance. By standing up in our stirrups we could obtain a wide view over the country on every side. We had not proceeded far when I saw, away to the southward, what seemed like a huge serpent moving through the grass, although I knew very well that a serpent it could not be. I pointed it out to my companion, who carried a telescope at his back, telling him what I at first thought it like.

He took a glance through the glass. "The distance deceives you," he answered, as calmly as if it was a matter of very little consequence, "that is a band of Indians on the war-path. I am certain of it. They are moving eastward; probably they are scouts, and long ago have discovered our waggons. What their intention is, I cannot say, but possibly it is to get into our rear, without, as they suppose, being seen. We must keep an eye upon them, but not on any account alter our course."

As before, I rode back to tell my father what we had seen. He also had discovered the war-party, and had determined what to do. The rough map we possessed showed us that there was a river ahead, but its character and the position of the fords were indistinctly marked. His object was, if possible, to cross before nightfall, so as to place it between our camp and the enemy. From thence a horseman could reach Fort Hamilton by galloping hard, in three or four days, we calculated, and should the Indians appear in overwhelming numbers, we might send forward for assistance. Either Mr Tidey or Uncle Denis would be ready to undertake the expedition. Just as I was about to rejoin

him, Mr Tidey fell back to consult with my father and uncle. At that moment too Dio came up from the rear, where he had been stationed; to tell us that he had made out another numerous party of Indians following our trail, but that they were still so far off that some time must elapse before they could overtake us. On hearing this my father hurried to the rear, to take a look at the strangers through his telescope. He immediately sent back Dio, who had accompanied him, to tell the drivers to push forward, with the utmost speed of which the oxen were capable, while Mr Tidey and I once more rode ahead to ascertain the best ground for the train to pass over. We could no longer make out the Indians we had before seen to the southward. We conjectured therefore that they had concealed themselves, and intended joining the party following our trail.

"They must have halted, or we should by this time have seen them nearer," observed Mr Tidey. "My idea is that they are waiting for the chance of our train being stopped by a breakdown, and fancy that they shall take us by surprise while we are off our guard. They are evidently under the impression that we have not discovered them, for though they are well aware that our rifles can shoot further than their bows and arrows, they are fortunately ignorant of the power of the telescope, and that we can see them much further than they can see us, keen as is their eyesight."

Whatever might have been the intention of the savages, they did not approach. We rode on, without having to deviate from our course, the ground being sufficiently level for the transit of the waggons. In a short time we saw extended before us an undulating region, though we had little doubt that we should be able to proceed along the hollows, without having to make any great *détour*. Already the evening was approaching, and as we had not found water during the day, we were eagerly looking out for a stream or pond at which we and our animals might quench our thirst. The sun was shining brightly, and, late in the day as it was, the heat was considerable. Presently I caught the sheen of water, but it appeared to be much below the level on which we were riding. I pointed it out to Mr Tidey, and as we galloped on we saw the summit of a line of cliffs.

"There is a river between us and the ground we wish to reach," observed Mr Tidey, "and I very much fear it is one we shall find it difficult to cross."

"If you will hold my horse, I will go ahead and ascertain the nature of the ground," I said.

"Be careful then, for I should not be surprised if you found yourself suddenly on the brink of a precipice," replied Mr Tidey, as I dismounted carrying my rifle.

"Never fear," I answered as I ran forward. I had not gone fifty yards when I saw a deep gully on my right hand, and in another minute discovered a river a hundred feet below me fringed by trees, beyond which rose a line of perpendicular cliffs, the tops of which we had seen in the distance. Gazing up and down the stream I could perceive no place by which the waggons could pass. I returned to my companion, and we rode together for some distance to the south-west, in the hopes of finding the ground slope down to a level with the water. We were, however, disappointed. It was therefore necessary to return to the train and to inform my father of our discovery, that he might decide what course to take. This then was the point towards which the wily Indians had seen us proceeding and had hoped that we should not perceive our danger until the leading waggon had gone over the cliff, when they would have taken the opportunity, so we fancied, of setting on us and gaining an easy victory.

They would, however, be disappointed, though we might find it difficult to select a suitable spot for camping, where we could obtain water and fuel, and at the same time defend ourselves should we be attacked.

On getting back to the train, we learned that the Indians had not again been seen. My father, on hearing our report, directed our course as Mr Tidey advised, to the south-west.

We had still more than an hour of daylight, and we calculated that we should have time before dark to reach the river, though it was doubtful whether we should find a practicable way down to the water.

Never before had the poor oxen been made to go so fast, for our safety might depend on our reaching the river before Mr Tidey and I once more rode forward. At length we found the ground decline slightly in the direction we were going. "As we are still evidently at a considerable height above the level of the stream, though perhaps we shall be unable to cross, we may camp near the edge of the cliffs, so that, at all events, we shall be safe from attack on that side," I observed.

"Not so sure of that," said Mr Tidey. "The Indians may know of a path up them which we may fail to discover, and if so, the cunning rascals will be sure to take advantage of it and

endeavour to surprise us, besides which, some of our cattle and horses may chance to tumble over it and break their necks. However, as we are aware of the dangers, we may guard against them."

A few minutes after this, we found ourselves once more close to the river.

"If you will hold my horse I will run along the brink of the precipice and try to discover a way down to the water," I said; "there is no lack of wood near the margin of the river, so if we can get down the cliffs we shall be able to obtain both those necessary articles." Still the cliffs were so steep, that I was almost in despair when I saw another gully, similar to the one I had before passed. On examining it, greatly to my satisfaction I found that it formed a deep notch as it were in the precipice, and that not only could a person on foot descend by it with the greatest ease to the river, but that even horses and cattle might make their way to the water. I shouted to Mr Tidey, who, coming up, agreed with me that we could not hope for a better place for camping. We accordingly galloped back to the train, and soon brought the waggons up to the spot, with which my father was perfectly satisfied. While the rest of the party were employed in placing the waggons so as to form the sides of a square, the cliffs and the gully serving as the two other sides to our camp, Mr Tidey, Dan, and I set off to explore the gully, for which purpose but little light now remained.

"Be cautious, boys, for that brushwood may conceal a lurking foe, though I don't think a red-skin is likely to show himself when he sees three rifles which may shoot him down if he does so," said the Dominie, as we commenced our descent. We found that by cutting away the brushwood and the trunks of a few trees we might form a road down to the level of the river, and that we might at once lead the horses and oxen to water. It was necessary, however, first to examine the foot of the cliff above which we were encamped, that we might ascertain what security it would afford us against a surprise from Indians on that side. On looking up it appeared to me to be perfectly precipitous, a few shrubs, however, projected here and there from the crevices of the rock, but they would not, I fancied, enable the most active savage to climb up, though by dropping from one to the other, a person might reach the bottom without breaking his neck. We examined the cliffs for some distance to the northward, of our camp. They retained the same character all the way.

"No savages can get up there, at all events," I observed, as we were returning.

"Not quite so sure of that," answered Mr Tidey. "We will not trust entirely to them. I will advise your father to post a sentinel on that side as well as the others." We hurried back, and were in time to assist in leading the horses and cattle down to the river. It would have been a fine opportunity for any lurking foes to have carried them off; probably, however, no Indians were in the neighbourhood, or if they were, they were deterred from approaching by seeing our rifles in our hands ready for action. My father was fully alive to the importance of guarding the two sides formed by the gully and the cliff, and he ordered all hands not required to keep guard on the outside of the camp, to employ their axes in cutting down enough timber for forming a breastwork,—by so doing we should, he remarked, lay bare the side of the gully and deprive our assailants of the protection the brushwood might afford them.

"If we are only to spend one night here, I wonder father thinks it necessary to take so much trouble," observed Dan.

"If the trouble is not taken, it might prove our last night, my boy," answered the Dominie, who overheard him: "if we cannot manage to keep the Indians out of the camp, we may find our scalps off our heads before the morning."

Two or three of the men, who were somewhat discontented with the last few days' hard travelling and short commons, though they had hitherto gone on without grumbling, began to express themselves much as Dan had done. Dio, who had been engaged in arranging the camp, and who had just come up axe in hand, overheard them.

"What you say, you boys?" he exclaimed; "dis niggas show you how to chop de trees," and, raising his axe, he began to strike away with a vigour which quickly cut through half a stout trunk. "Dare, dat de way dey chop in Kentucky!" he again exclaimed, as the tree came down with a crash. Tree after tree quickly fell beneath his axe. The rest of the men, put to shame by his zeal, followed his example, and we soon had timber sufficient for our purpose.

Our next business was to drag it into the required position.

This we did with the help of the oxen, for without them we should have been unable to accomplish the undertaking.

At length we got up a rough breastwork on two sides of the camp, while our waggons and their cargoes, with the aid of a few additional posts, served to strengthen our position.

We surveyed our fort with considerable satisfaction. One side we might consider impregnable; the second, that along the edge of the ravine, was not likely to be attacked, and we had a sufficient force of rifles to defend the other two against a whole horde of savages without fire-arms.

"Yes, our fort is a strong one," observed the Dominie, "but many a stronger has been captured when the garrison thought themselves secure. We must still be on the watch against surprise or treachery. Depend upon it, the red-skins will employ their usual cunning rather than run the risk of losing their lives by an open assault on our position. Your father is too old a soldier not to think of that, but I want to impress the importance of the matter on your uncle and the rest of the men, who appear to fancy that all we shall have to do is to remain here quietly, until the captain thinks fit to move on again."

"I'll promise you to keep my eyes open, and to impress the same duty on the other men," I answered.

"Especially keep them open towards the very point which you fancy so secure, down that cliff. You or I might find it a tough job to climb up it with our boots and gaiters, and heavy coats, but a half-naked savage, with his scalping-knife in his teeth, would not think it so hard a matter, and hard or not hard, if mortal man can do it, he'll try, if he hopes to catch us napping when he gets to the top."

We were now summoned to the supper which had been in the meantime preparing, and my mother, with Kathleen and Lily, followed by Biddy and the nurse Rose, joined us round the camp-fire. The security which we now enjoyed made us forget the dangers we had passed, and those we might anticipate, and put us all into good spirits.

Of course the usual number of men were on the watch, but I observed that my father was constantly in the attitude of listening; and both he and the Dominie frequently got up and walked round the camp, the Dominie especially taking many a peep over the breastwork above the cliff.

"In my opinion, that part should not be left unguarded for a moment," he said. "The rush of the water below prevents us from hearing anyone moving beneath, and we can hardly see

ten feet down, while an Indian would not take half as many seconds to spring to the top and be in our midst."

As it was important that the men should obtain some rest after the fatigues they had gone through, those not required to be on guard were ordered to lie down. Before doing so, however, the horses and cattle were brought inside the camp, where they might be in security should the Indians suddenly come upon us during the hours of darkness.

My father, Uncle Denis, and the Dominie divided the watch between them, so that one was always on duty. I was appointed to act under Mr Tidey, and it fell to his lot to keep the morning watch. I don't think I ever slept more soundly in my life, for I had been on horseback, or in active exercise since sunrise. I rubbed my eyes when called by Uncle Denis.

"We have had a quiet night, not a sign of the redskins, and I suspect, should they have reconnoitred our camp from a distance, they have thought it wise to let it alone," he said.

"You may be right, Mr O'Dwyer; but, notwithstanding, the night is not over, and until I see the sun rise I shall not be satisfied that we are to move on without a skirmish," observed the Dominie.

"Well, well! I hope to get my night's rest out without interruption," answered Uncle Denis, as he stretched himself on the ground, and turned on his side to go to sleep.

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## Chapter Eight.

**Ready for the foe—Dio's master-stroke—The battle—Defeat of the redskins—Watching through the night—A reconnoitring party—A perilous duty—The coast clear—Exploring the woods—The rustling in the leaves—An American lion—Fight between a puma and boar—Fresh provisions—No enemy near—Tim Casey's redskins—The start—Seeking a ford—Crossing discovered by Dio—A cavalry engagement—Death of an Indian chief—A strange colony—Prairie dogs—Scarcity of water—Sufferings of the party—Set out to procure relief—Make for Fort Hamilton—Horses bitten by rattle-snake—A welcome sign—Friends or foes—The**

**sergeant of the guard—The challenge after the shot—The fort reached—Our reception—The doctor's treatment of my horse—A visit to the fortifications.**

Kept on the alert by Mr Tidey's warnings, I continued racing up and down the portion of the camp which had been allotted to me to guard. It was the north-west angle, contained by the line of breastwork which ran along the edge of the ravine and half of that by the brink of the cliff. I frequently stopped to listen, stretching over as far as I could to look down into the depths of the gorge below, I had been on watch about an hour and had just reached the eastern end of my beat, where it joined that of Dio, who was posted at the northern angle, when I saw the black come creeping towards me.

"Hist! Massa Mike," he whispered, "me tink me hear someting down below, may be bear or painter, or may be red-skin comin' to try and cut our t'roats. He no get in so easy 'dough. Jes' come an' say what you t'ink it is, Massa Mike, but not show yourself, or if red-skin savage him shoot his arrow."

Following Dio's example, I stooped down and crept cautiously on to the point to which he conducted me. We listened attentively. The sound of the cattle cropping the grass, or the cry of some night-bird, and now and then the snore of a sleeper, alone broke the silence of night.

"I can hear no sounds, Dio," I whispered.

"Dat show me dat he no bear, painter, or wolf, for dey rush about de brushwood. Red-skin too clever for dat."

"Keep watch then, Dio," I said, "while I call Mr Tidey. You very likely are right; and if he thinks so, we must rouse up the rest of the camp. You must keep an eye to my post, which I ought not to quit except on an emergency."

I ran to the opposite angle, where the Dominie had stationed himself, and told him that Dio had heard a movement below us.

"Just what I expected," he answered; "go back to your post, and I will call up your father and uncle, and the rest of the men if necessary."

I hurried back and had scarcely got half-way across the camp, though it was not many paces wide, when I saw Dio lift up his double-handed axe, and strike a blow with it at some object



which was to me invisible. The Dominie, who had seen the occurrence, rushed back to the breastwork. We were just in time to catch sight of the feather-bedecked heads of two Indians rising above the bank, on which they were about to place their knees. The next moment Dio's axe came down on one of them, while the Dominie struck a blow at the other which hurled him backwards.

"Give a look to the side of the gully, they will be attempting to get in there presently. The Indians expect to surprise us, but we will turn the tables on them," whispered Mr Tidey.

I followed his directions, but on looking over the breastwork could see no one. My father and the other men were on their feet in a moment. Hitherto not a word had been spoken above a whisper, so that should any redskins be making their way up the gully they would not discover that we were on the alert, unless the sound of the falling bodies of those who had been killed had reached their ears. I was quickly joined by Uncle Denis and Dan, who had crept along so as not to show their heads over the fortifications. We had thrown a quantity of brushwood on the logs, which served more effectually to conceal us, with here and there an opening through which we could look. We each of us stationed ourselves at one of these loop-holes. Several minutes had passed, I listened, expecting that some sound would indicate the approach of the enemy, but I could neither hear nor see anything, and I began to fancy that the three Indians we had disposed of were alone engaged in the attempt to surprise us, or that their companions, if they had any, on their being killed, had taken to flight. What was going on, on the other side of the camp, I could not tell, but I felt very sure that my father was keeping a vigilant watch, and was prepared for whatever might occur. The camp was wrapped in as perfect silence as if we had all been asleep. Presently it was broken by the reports of rifles fired almost simultaneously, succeeded by a chorus of the most fearful yells and whoops I had ever heard, proceeding from the throats it seemed of a whole legion of savages. The horses and terrified cattle tugged at their tether ropes, two or three breaking loose and rushing up to the side I was on for protection, being the furthest from the dreaded sounds. Others stood trembling, too paralysed with fear to move. Had it not been for the breastwork, I suspect we should have lost many of them over the cliff. My first impulse was to hasten to the side attacked, but in the interval between the war-whoops, I heard my father's voice shouting, "Stay all of you at your posts, we don't know on which side we may next be attacked."

Our men continued firing as rapidly as they could load, and as far as I could judge were successfully keeping the foe at bay; though showers of arrows kept falling into the camp, and we on the opposite side ran no slight risk of being wounded. I was looking through my loophole, when I saw some dark objects creeping out from amid the brushwood on the opposite side of the ravine. Under other circumstances I should have supposed that they were four-footed animals, wolves, or wild hogs, but as it was, I was very certain that they were men. They advanced but a few paces, then stopped as if surveying the side of the fort in front of them. Once more they began to creep on slowly. Hurrying up to Dan, I despatched him to tell our father what I had seen, and that within a minute probably we should be attacked.

"I see them," whispered Uncle Denis, "we must hold them in check until assistance arrives."

We were not long kept in a state of suspense. In a shorter space of time than I had expected another fearful shriek rent the air, and a host of dark forms sprang into view; at the same moment a flight of arrows came whistling above our heads. The brushwood, however, deceived them, and the missiles flew over us, though we feared that some of the cattle would be wounded.

"Now give it them!" cried my uncle, and we both fired, bringing down two of our assailants. For a moment they were checked, but once again moving on, they began scrambling up the side of the breastwork, and would in another instant have been over it, when we were joined by my father, Mr Tidey, and most of the men, who, having poured a volley full in the faces of the foe, seized their axes and soon cleared the breastwork. We quickly reloaded again, and fired on our retreating enemies, who sprang down the sides of the gully, to shelter themselves in the brushwood from which I had seen them emerge. Scarcely was this done, than a shout from Martin Prentis, who was in charge of the opposite side, summoned back the party to defend it. They reloaded as they went, and were just in time to fire a volley on the savages who had rallied and charged almost close up to the waggons; but meeting unexpectedly so determined a resistance, they once more scampered off, much faster than they had approached.

We still kept, however, a vigilant watch on the cliff side, lest the cunning savages, fancying that we should be off our guard, might again attempt to surprise us. As may be supposed none of us turned in. Some of the men were employed in examining

the wounds the cattle had received. Fortunately two of the people only had been slightly hurt by the arrows, several of which, however, were found sticking in the waggons, or had gone through the tilts.

Mr Tidey, Dio, and I continued pacing up and down above the cliff, over which we constantly looked, our eyes endeavouring to detect any movement in the bushes, which might indicate the presence of Indians.

As far as we could see through the gloom, all was perfectly quiet. At length some bright streaks appeared in the eastern sky. Slowly the light increased, and we could see and hear the water as it flowed far down below us, the cliffs on the opposite side of the river coming into view; still a part of the trees across the gully were shrouded in gloom, and might, for what we could tell, conceal our foes.

It was with a feeling of thankfulness that I at length saw the sun himself rising above the prairie, over which we had passed on the previous day, and soon the whole country was lighted up by his bright rays. From the elevated position of our camp, we could obtain an extensive view to the eastward and south, though the rising ground across the river to the north prevented us from seeing far in that direction, while the wood which clothed the side of the ravine continued on some way to the westward, and shut out the prospect.

"We must manage to ascertain whether any of the red-skins are lurking in that wood," observed Mr Tidey; "they are very likely to have stowed themselves away, ready to rush out upon us, while they fancy that most of the men are engaged with the cattle outside, or have gone down to the river to draw water. It won't do to trust those fellows, notwithstanding the defeat they have received."

I agreed with him, and arranged, if my father did not object, to make an excursion into the wood as soon as we had had breakfast, taking care not to be surprised ourselves by those whose presence it was our object to discover. As soon as I was off my watch, I went to ascertain how it fared with my mother and her young charges. She had remained in her tent, under the shelter of the waggons, during the whole time, and had been less alarmed, she assured me, than I had expected. "I knew that your father had taken all possible means to defend the camp, and that the men would do their duty; and I trusted that God in His mercy would protect us," she said. Kathleen and Lily, who were awakened by the firing, threw their arms round

my neck. Kathleen asked when the redskins would be driven away, but poor Lily was naturally far more frightened, believing that the savages would kill us all as they had lately killed her friends. Rose was almost as much alarmed, but Biddy was ready to stand up and fight with the men, had her services been required.

My father, I found, had determined to remain a couple of days in our present camp, for the purpose of resting the cattle, and in the hopes that the Indians, finding that we were well prepared to resist their attacks, would move to a distance, so that we might proceed without further molestation to Fort Hamilton. My father, calling the men together, praised them for their conduct.

"If you all are as watchful as heretofore, and behave with the same cool courage, I feel very sure that we shall make our way through and defeat the redskins, should any come near us," he observed: "we must now find out whether any savages are lurking in yonder wood, that we may not run the risk of being attacked while we are taking our cattle down to the river."

On hearing this remark, I told him what Mr Tidey proposed, and begged leave to accompany the Dominie.

"I cannot forbid my own son to perform a duty which I would impose on others," he answered. "You may go, Mike, and I must charge you as I should anybody else, to be cautious; you have a wily foe to deal with, and you must take care not to let any of the Indians get between you and the camp."

I of course promised to use all due precaution. Dio, who had been attentively listening to what my father said, offered at once to go down to the bottom of the cliff and ascertain if any of our enemies were concealed in the brushwood which skirted the borders of the river.

"It still dark down dare, an' dey not see me," he observed. Though the rays of the rising sun glanced across the higher ground, the light had scarcely yet penetrated into the depths below; still it was doubtful if even Dio would escape the sharp eyes of the Indians, should any be concealed and lurking near. However, as it was important to ascertain whether any remained, my father did not prohibit him from carrying out his intention. Slipping over the breastwork, he disappeared among the trees in the ravine. We listened somewhat anxiously for any sound which might indicate that he had discovered a foe, or rather that a foe had discovered him, but as we looked down

over the cliff, we could neither see nor hear anyone moving among the dense brushwood. In a few minutes, greatly to our relief, he returned, reporting that although he had found some marks of blood on the rocks where the Indians had fallen, that their bodies had been removed, proving that a number of the enemy must have collected there with the intention of climbing up the cliff, but had been deterred by the death of their companions. We had now to ascertain if the wood itself was clear of them.

As soon as we had taken a hasty breakfast, the Dominie and I set off; Martin Prentis and Dio accompanying us a short distance. It was intended that they should return if no enemies were discovered, so that the horses and cattle might be led down to the river without delay. As we made our way along, we examined every bush or rock which might conceal a foe, but minute as was our search we could, discover no one. We therefore sent back our companions, saying that we were sure there could be no risk in letting the thirsty animals go down to the river. As there were only two of us, we had now to proceed more cautiously. It thus took us a considerable time to cover but a small space of ground. As the sun was still low, many parts of the forest were shrouded in gloom, though here and there the light penetrated amid the trunks of the trees and enabled us to see far ahead. We kept ourselves concealed as we advanced, waiting occasionally to listen, but no sounds reached our ears. If we spoke, it was in low whispers, when we were close together.

"I am pretty well satisfied that no Indians are here," observed Mr Tidey, "still we must be prudent, and run no unnecessary risk."

Again we advanced, when suddenly he made a sign for me to stop. A rustling in the brushwood had reached his ear. I heard it also; it came from a spot some way ahead. Directly before us appeared a huge tree which had been partially uprooted, the trunk being at a sharp angle with the ground, while the boughs resting against those of its neighbours had prevented it from falling prostrate. We crept towards it, and finding that I could easily clamber up I did so, followed by Mr Tidey. We could thus see much further ahead than from the ground below. We had been there about a minute, the rustling sound still continuing.

"If the Indians are making their way through the wood, they cannot suppose that anyone is near, or they would be more cautious," I observed.

"No Indians would make a noise like that," whispered Mr Tidey; "see!"

Just then a wild boar broke through the brushwood, making its way among the tall grass, which he dug up with his tusks as if in search of roots. Presently he lay down to enjoy at his ease the repast he had thus procured. Instinctively I raised my rifle to my shoulder, when my companion made a sign.

"Don't fire," he said; "for should the Indians be in the neighbourhood, the sound will attract them towards us."

"But the boar will escape, and we shall lose the pork, which will be so acceptable in camp," I remarked.

"Better to lose the pork than be scalped," answered the Dominie, though he gazed at the boar with a wistful eye.

We were still undecided what to do, when we caught sight of another large animal creeping along from an opposite direction towards the boar. So stealthily did it advance, that the boar appeared to be unconscious of its approach.

The newcomer was the creature commonly known among the western settlers as the "painter," but more properly called the puma or American lion. It is a powerful animal with a tawny hide, larger than the largest dog, and more like a tiger than a lion. It will seldom attack man, unless it can take him at a disadvantage, and if boldly met will run off rather than fight. When pressed by hunger, however, it is very savage, and with its sharp claws and teeth proves a formidable antagonist. It was not likely to attack us while expecting to enjoy a feast of pork. We were both afraid of speaking, lest we should attract its attention, and the boar, being alarmed, might effect its escape.

On crept the "painter" in the attitude of a cat about to seize some helpless bird. The moment it came within a few paces it made a tremendous spring and alighted with its four paws on the body of the boar. Whether or not the latter had seen it coming out of the corner of one of its eyes I could not tell, but as the "painter" made its bound, it rose to its feet and with its sharp tusks inflicted a severe wound in the breast of its antagonist. A fearful struggle now commenced between the two animals, the "painter" endeavouring to seize the neck of the boar with its teeth, while the boar drove its tusks again and again into the breast and shoulders of the puma, giving vent, at the same time, to its rage and fear in angry grunts, shrieks, and squeaks, sufficient to attract the attention of any hungry

redskins, who would guess what was going forward, within a mile of us. Still, in spite of the wounds it had received, there was every probability that the puma, from its greater agility, would gain the victory. The boar's thick skin was torn off in several places by the claws and teeth of its antagonist. Its movements became slower and slower, till the puma, having learned to avoid its tusks, sprang on its back, and then rolling it over with one blow of its paw, tore out its inside. The "painter" having thus gained the victory, began forthwith to feast on pork.

"Come, that's more than I bargained for," exclaimed Mr Tidey, and forgetting the caution he had given me, he lifted his rifle and fired. His bullet went through the head of the puma, which rolled over by the side of its late antagonist.

"You told me not to fire for fear of attracting the Indians," I observed.

"So I did, but I am satisfied that the uproar made by the boar would have brought them to the spot had there been any in the neighbourhood," he answered. "I don't think we have cause to fear them. Keep watch, however, where you are, while I go down and cut up the porker. Should you hear or see any Indians coming this way give me timely notice, and I will rejoin you. We shall be able to hold our own against them, but I do not expect that we shall be interfered with."

Saying this, he scrambled down the trunk of the tree, and cautiously approached the puma. His bullet, however, had effectually deprived it of life. Accordingly, placing his rifle on the ground, so that he might seize it in a moment, he began to cut up the boar. The operation did not take his practised hand long to perform. I was too much occupied, however, in watching the approaches from all directions to perceive what he was about, for every instant I expected to see the painted face of an Indian brave emerging from among the trees. No one appeared, and at length I heard Mr Tidey shout out:—

"The pork is ready for transport, we will make the best of our way back to camp, so come down and help me, Mike. We may report that there are no Indians in the wood, or we should have made their acquaintance long ago."

I found that Mr Tidey had not only cut up the boar, but had flayed the puma, from the skin of which he had formed a number of thongs. Some of them served to secure to our backs as much of the pork as we could carry, while with others we

fastened up the remainder of the boar to the boughs of a tree, to prevent either wolves or other animals from reaching it until we could return with one of the horses to carry it into camp. Our task being completed, we set off, taking a direct line back, keeping well in the centre of the wood, that we might run no risk of being seen by any Indians outside it.

The pork we had brought was extremely welcome, as we had had no fresh provisions for some days. Dio, with one of the other men immediately volunteered to go out and bring in the remainder, our trail being sufficiently distinct to enable them without difficulty to reach the spot. As the Indians had not reappeared during our absence, it was hoped that they would not incur any danger in the expedition. Mr Tidey, however, though pretty well tired, insisted on accompanying them as soon as he had taken some food. The two wounded men were going on well, and the cattle which had been hurt by the Indians' arrows did not appear to be much the worse from the injuries they had received. None of the people were idle, those not on watch being employed in repairing the waggons and harness, cleaning their arms, filling the water-skins, mending their clothes, or in cutting wood for our fires or cooking. Late in the day Mr Tidey and his companions appeared with the remainder of the boar's flesh, which they had found untouched, though the carcase of the puma had been eaten up by a pack of coyotes, the traces of whose feet they discovered under the bough to which the meat had been suspended.

We now prepared for another night, every one being aware that before it was over we might be engaged in a deadly struggle for our lives, for it was more than probable that the Indians, though defeated, might make another attempt to surprise us. As all the grass within the camp had been consumed, it was necessary to allow the cattle and horses to remain outside, three men being stationed to watch them. I felt very thankful when I was able to wrap myself up in my buffalo robe, and go to sleep, and so I am sure were all hands to lie down and rest. Some time after midnight my ears caught the sound of firing. I started to my feet, and seized my rifle, expecting to find that the camp was attacked, every one else also was aroused. The reports had come from the direction where the cattle we feeding, and presently Uncle Denis and I, who hurried out to ascertain the cause of the alarm, met them, urged on by the voices of their drovers, moving leisurely towards the camp. On coming up to one of the men, Tim Casey by name, we inquired where the enemy had been seen, for we could perceive no objects moving anywhere.



"Sure, didn't I catch sight of a whole tribe of the murderin' villins creepin' up on all fours, loike so minny big rats towards us, and didn't they turn tail an' scamper off when I fired at thim."

The other men had not even seen the enemy.

"Depend on it, Tim, that your tribe of redskins were a tribe of coyotes, who might, however, have pulled down one of the oxen had you not driven them off," said Uncle Denis. "You may let the cattle rest without any fear of an attack for the present, for the appearance of the wolves is a pretty sure sign that no redskins are in the neighbourhood."

Uncle Denis was right in his conjectures, the night passed away without any further alarm. We had hopes of enjoying a complete rest during the day, but the forest to the westward and the dense wood below us, caused my father some anxiety, as they might afford concealment to an approaching enemy, and we were compelled therefore to keep a constant watch against surprise. As evening approached and it was necessary again to water the cattle, two parties were sent out, one along the bank of the river, and the other to examine the forest some distance from the camp. Both returned reporting that they had met with neither human beings nor animals, and the cattle were accordingly led down as before to the river side. It was somewhat difficult to account for our being allowed to remain in quiet. The only way we could do so was from supposing that the Indians had lost so many men that they thought it prudent not to molest us while we remained in camp. The question was whether they would venture to attack the train when we were once more moving on. Still, move we must, and preparations were made for starting at daybreak the following morning.

The weather was beautifully fine, and we were all in good health and in excellent spirits, considering the dangers by which we were surrounded. Another night went tranquilly by, and the instant the first faint streaks of light appeared in the eastern sky my father roused up all hands. In an instant we were engaged in our respective duties, reloading the waggons, harnessing the cattle, and saddling the horses. We were quickly in order, the word was given to move on. My father, on his stout horse, led the way, keeping at some distance from the wood, on which he directed us to maintain a vigilant watch lest a party of Indians, expecting to find us off our guard, might be in ambush beneath its shelter, and pounce out upon us. Mr Tidey and I rode one on either flank, sometimes pushing on ahead, with our rifles ready to fire at any foe who might appear,

and to retreat to the main body according to my father's directions. The wood was at length passed, and we obtained an extensive view over the country, on every side. Our object was now to find a ford by which we might cross the river. In case of not discovering one, we intended to form rafts to ferry over the waggons, while the horses and oxen would have to swim across. To do this; however, would be a work of great labour and involve the loss of much time, besides the risk of having the waggons upset. They would have, we foresaw, to be floated down to a convenient landing-place, should one not be found opposite to the spot where we might embark. Above the river rose a number of high bluffs one beyond the other. While Dio, who now accompanied Mr Tidey and me, held our horses, we climbed to the summits of several of them, hoping to discover the anxiously desired ford.

Time after time we had been disappointed as we had seen the river still flowing on through a narrow and deep channel, across which it would have been impossible for our waggons to pass.

The day was drawing to a close.

"If we do not discover the ford soon, we shall have to camp again on this side," observed my companion. "There is another height, perhaps we shall be more fortunate this time!"

We dismounted, and Dio took our reins, while we made our way to the top of the bluff. Looking back we could see the train about half a mile off, slowly following in our tracks. Beyond us, to the southward, the country appeared much more level than that we had lately passed over, while, greatly to our satisfaction, the river widened out considerably, the ground sloping down gradually on both sides to the water.

"That part looks fordable at all events," said the Dominie, pointing it out to me. "If we cannot get across in any other way, we must make rafts of the waggons and send a small part of their cargoes over at a time. The undertaking can be easily performed, provided the Indians keep at a distance, but it would be awkward to be attacked while engaged in the operation."

"We will hope for the best," I answered; "but we will take a look round the country, and we may perhaps discover them, should any be moving about in the distance."

We swept our glasses round and round the horizon several times. Once I thought that I caught sight of a party of Indians moving rapidly over the ground, but what I saw proved to be a

herd of antelopes. We observed also several buffaloes, which made us wish that we had time to go and hunt them, for a fat cow would have been welcome. The idea however of going in chase of them was not to be thought of, considering the risk we should run of falling in with Indians who might be on the watch for us. Still tolerably satisfied that no enemies were within a distance of several miles, we descended the hill and pushed on to that part of the river which appeared likely to afford us a passage. On reaching it, Dio exclaimed—

“Me tink me get ‘cross, me go in an’ try; if too deep, me swim like one fish!”

Without waiting for permission, he dashed forward. We watched him anxiously: at first the water reached scarcely above his horse’s knees, but as he advanced it grew deeper and deeper, and presently, to our disappointment, we saw the animal swimming, while Dio, who threw himself from its back, struck out with one hand, while he guided it across with the other. The horse quickly regained its feet, and after wading for forty or fifty yards, stepped again on dry ground. Dio immediately mounted, and pointing down the stream, made signs to us that he would recross in that direction; we rode along the bank, very doubtful, however, whether a fordable spot could be found. Once more Dio rode into the stream, and we watched him anxiously as the water rose higher and higher up his horse’s legs. Still the animal walked on, though in the centre the water reached nearly to the girths, soon after however gradually diminishing in depth. There could be no doubt, if the ground was hard, that the waggons could be got over. On this point Dio gave a favourable report, and we, both riding in, crossed at some distance from each other over even ground. Mr Tidey sent Dio back to report our discovery to my father, while we rode backwards and forwards several times to assure ourselves that the ford was of ample width to allow not only one waggon but two or three to cross abreast if necessary; by the time the leading waggon arrived we had thoroughly surveyed the ford, and it at once began to descend the slope to the water’s edge. Scarcely had the oxen’s feet entered the stream, when Tim Casey came riding up, sent by Uncle Denis from the rear, to say that he made out some horsemen in the far distance, who, he much feared, were Indians.

“We shall have time to cross and form our camp on the opposite side, before they can reach us,” answered my father. “Tell Mr O’Dwyer to hurry on the rearmost waggons; but keep cool, my lads; there is no cause for alarm; for should there be no other

ford in the neighbourhood, the savages cannot cross to attack us on the other side, and we can easily defend ourselves against any number of assailants."

While Mr Tidey and Dio forded the river, to form the waggons as they got over, my father and I remained to direct the passage. As they arrived one after the other, he ordered them to push across without a moment's delay. I saw that he frequently cast a glance in the direction in which, from the report sent by Uncle Denis, we expected the Indians to appear. He retained several of the men not absolutely required to attend the waggons. The two last had got down to the brink of the river, when Uncle Denis, who had remained some distance in the rear, came galloping up.

"The Indians are approaching," he exclaimed; "they will be here before the waggons are across."

"Push on then, my lads," said my father to the drivers; "we are ready for them, and if they venture near, they will have to mourn the loss of some of their braves."

The waggon wheels were in the water, the oxen tugged away, urged on by their drivers. My father, Uncle Denis and I, with Martin and two other men, remained behind to protect them until they were safe across. A little on one side, the bank was somewhat of a cliff-like form of sufficient height to conceal us when we stooped down from the foe. We could hear the tramp of the Indians' horses as they galloped on, doubtlessly supposing that they should soon come on the unprotected rear of the train, and easily carry off two or three waggons.

We remained motionless until we caught sight of the heads of the leading horses of the enemy, the chiefs shouting and shrieking as they were about to dash forward into the stream.

"Now, fire!" cried my father, and half a dozen redskins toppled over from their saddles.

"Wallop, a-hoo, a-boo, Erin-go-bragh!" shouted Uncle Denis.

We echoed his cries, as, digging spurs into our steeds without stopping to reload, we threw ourselves on the advancing foe, pistolling some and cutting down others.

Those who were still on the level ground, and had command of their horses, seeing the fall of their companions, wheeled round and retreated to a distance, while some, who had got too far to

stop themselves, leapt into the river beyond the ford where their small steeds were soon carried off their legs and together with their riders swept down the current.

"Now let us cross while we can, before those fellows charge again," cried my father, and urging our horses into the water we followed the waggons, the rearmost of which were by this time more than half-way over.

What I have described occupied scarcely a minute. Our chief object was now to get the waggons across, and to place them in position, before the Indians, recovering from the panic, should perceive the smallness of our covering party and again swoop down upon us. To be prepared for them, we reloaded as we crossed the stream, trusting to the sure-footedness of our horses not to stumble.

The drivers exerted themselves to the utmost, encouraged by Dio, who rushed again and again into the water to urge on the oxen, most of whom tried to drink as they found their noses close to the refreshing liquid.

There was just time for the waggons to reach the bank, and to be placed with their broadsides towards the ford, when we saw the enemy again approaching.

"Let no one fire until they are half-way across, and then don't throw a shot away," cried my father, as the rest of the men joined us.

The leading waggons formed in line along the bank. The savages, unwilling to lose so rich a prize as they hoped to obtain by the capture of our train, came galloping forward, shouting and shrieking as before.

"Let them whoop again as loud as they like, but they'll not frighten us," cried Martin Prentis; "we'll give them a British cheer in return," and raising his voice, every person joining, a cheer was uttered which must have astonished the redskins: their pace slackened, but still they advanced, encouraged by a chief, who, waving a spear, rode on ahead. He was not aware how far our bullets could reach.

Uncle Denis, raising his rifle, took a steady aim. The steed galloped on a few yards, when the chief, waving his spear and shouting to the last, fell dead to the ground. His followers, coming up, reined in their horses, uttering loud wails, and then, wheeling round, bore him away with them, nor stopped until

they were out of sight. As they made no further attempt to recover the bodies of those who had before fallen, it was an acknowledgment of their complete defeat, and we had reason to hope that we should not be further molested. We now set busily to work to form our camp, to cut wood for our fire, keeping, notwithstanding our success, a vigilant watch on all sides. It was possible that other bands of Indians might be on the western bank of the river and that we should still have to fight our way to the fort.

The night passed tranquilly by, and the next morning we proceeded as before. The apparently boundless prairie stretched out ahead, covered chiefly with long grass and here and there small bushes, which the buffalo and deer had allowed to struggle into existence. We advanced as rapidly as we could, steering by the compass, the scenery monotonous in the extreme, not a hill to be seen to break the wide circle of the horizon. One advantage was that we could not be taken by surprise, as we could see for a long distance any enemy which might approach us. We found numberless skeletons of buffaloes as well as their wallows, though we had not hitherto fallen in with any to which we might give chase.

Mr Tidey and I were, as usual, leading ahead, taking care always to keep the train in view. Every now and then he stood up in his stirrups, in the hopes of seeing buffalo, but no buffalo appeared. We, however, after proceeding about a dozen miles from the river, saw away to the left, over a wide extent of ground, a number of small hillocks, which, had I been on foot, I might have mistaken for a range of hills in the distance. As it would not take us much out of our way, we rode towards them, when, as we approached we saw to our surprise that the top of every mound was occupied either by a small animal or a bird of an owl-like appearance, which appeared to be watching the rest of the community, employed in cropping the grass or running about in the immediate neighbourhood.

As the little creatures perceived us, they rushed to their look-out station at the top of the mounds, while at the same moment a number of small heads popped up from holes in the ground, and we were saluted by a chorus of sharp, angry barks, while the animals shook their sides and wagged their tails at every bark, as if they would wag them off; then, having thus exhibited either their pleasure or fear—it was difficult to say which—uttering a fresh volley of barks, they rushed headlong into their burrows, wagging their tails to the last as they disappeared

beneath the surface. The little owls, however, kept their posts and regarded us with their round eyes, utterly destitute of fear.

I burst into a fit of laughter. "What are these funny creatures, I wonder?" I asked.

"They are prairie dogs, and we have fallen in with a prairie dog town, though I little expected to find one so far north," answered the Dominie; "we should farther away find them covering acres of ground. It is said that an owl and a rattlesnake are invariably to be found in each hole, living in perfect amity with its inmates, but I suspect that although rattlesnakes are often to be found in the abodes of the small rodents, their object in going there is rather to devour the young prairie dogs than for any friendly purpose, though it is possible that the owls take up their residence among them for the sake of society."

The animals we were watching were of the size of a rabbit, with hair like that of a rat, the colour being of a light red, resembling the squirrel. Their tails, however, instead of curling over, stood straight up over their backs and seemed formed for the express purpose of wagging, which they did to a prodigious amount. They are of the most sociable disposition, and are generally found living in large colonies on the prairies. We watched for a minute or two, but they did not again show their noses above the ground. No sooner, however, had we turned our horses' heads, and begun to ride off, than we were saluted by a chorus of barks, which was kept up until we were out of hearing.

We should have halted at noon, but as no water could be found, we pushed on, in the hopes of coming to a pool at which the cattle could drink. We carried, however, enough in our water-bottles to slake our own thirst. The sun beat down on our heads with greater force than we had yet experienced, and compelled us frequently to apply to them. The poor animals, we knew, must be suffering greatly, but the small portion of the precious liquid we could have spared would have afforded them no relief. In vain we rode sometimes to the north, sometimes to the south, in the hopes of discovering the smallest puddle. At last we had to halt to rest the weary cattle, though we could find no water, and without it they showed no inclination to crop the hard, wiry grass. We therefore remained but a short time, and once more pushed forward. As evening approached we began to feel very anxious, for without water the oxen could scarcely perform their next day's journey. The sun, verging towards the west, was shining in our eyes and prevented us from discerning objects in that direction. At length Mr Tidey, who was on ahead, shouted to me that he saw a hollow, with shrubs growing round

it, and that in all probability water would be found at the bottom; I got up alongside him, and we rode forward together. As we drew nearer the hollow appeared to increase in size, but still we could see no water.

"Surely there must be some there!" exclaimed Mr Tidey; "it cannot all have dried up."

I felt rather doubtful about that, but when we reached the brink of the hollow our anxiety was relieved by seeing a pool, though of small dimensions and covered over with a thick coat of green, broken here and there by some water-fowl which had dipped into it. Such as it was, it was better than no water, and we rode back to guide the waggons to it. As we drew up on the bank we could scarcely restrain the oxen from rushing down to quench their burning thirst. It was necessary, however, to water the horses first, though we could not allow them to take their fill, for fear of exhausting the supply. As soon as the oxen were unyoked, some nearly rolled over on their noses in their eagerness to drink the stagnant water. After they had been led back it was with difficulty we could prevent their returning, but it was necessary to preserve some of the water for the following morning. Though we kept a watch as usual all night, we had not much fear of being attacked, as the want of water, would, we hoped, prevent the Indians from approaching us.

Some time before the streak of pink and gold which announces the coming dawn appeared in the sky, we were all on foot and the horses were led down to be watered, but instead of the liquid we expected to find, a mass of soft mud, through which it had sunk, was alone to be discovered. Without stopping therefore for breakfast, we immediately yoked in the oxen and pushed forward, hoping that before noon we might reach some stream or another water-hole. Our own supply of the necessary liquid was almost exhausted, and we ourselves might suffer severely if none could be found. Usually the men, as they trudged forward, amused themselves by singing songs or cutting jokes, but even the merriest were now silent and their countenances grew longer and longer as the day advanced and no water appeared. My father and uncle held a consultation. We might have to travel on, not only for one day, but for two or three days, without finding water, and the fort, from whence alone we were certain of obtaining relief, was still far distant. To turn back, however, and afterwards take a different route, would be as dangerous as to advance, as we should probably have to encounter the band of Indians with whom we had had the fight, and who would be certain to try and revenge the



death of their warriors. At last it was decided that the train should continue to advance, and that Mr Tidey, Dio, and I should push forward on horseback to the fort. We there hoped to obtain a guide who would conduct us to where water was to be found. Our horses were in better condition than the rest of the animals with the exception of those my father and Uncle Denis usually rode. They however considered it necessary to remain with the train, and to keep their horses in case of requiring them on an emergency.

Carrying such provisions as we might require on our backs, with a good store of ammunition and our rifles slung across our shoulders, we set out, Mr Tidey having a pocket compass by which we could direct our course. We hoped to reach the fort in two or three days at furthest, and we might do so sooner could we find water to refresh our steeds. Our own water-bottles contained but a small supply, but it was all that could be spared. My father charged us to keep a watchful look-out for Indians, and should we see any in the distance, either to hide ourselves or to trust to the fleetness of our steeds, rather than risk an encounter. Having bid farewell to my mother, Kathleen, Lily, and Dan, who was disappointed at not being allowed to accompany us, I joined Mr Tidey and Dio, and we pushed on ahead of the train.

The heat was as great as on the previous day, but, as the Dominie observed, "We must not care for a slight inconvenience of that sort." I however twisted a white handkerchief round my hat, to keep off the rays of the sun, and he followed my example. Dio seemed very indifferent to them, his woolly pate protecting him better than all the artificial contrivances we could adopt. The only living creatures we saw were several deer passing in the far distance to the westward. Of course we could not venture out of our course to chase them. Neither streams nor water-holes could we discover, and we were obliged at length to encamp on the open prairie. Having tethered our horses a short distance from us, where they could crop the grass, wet with the dew of night, and having eaten our scanty supper, we lay down with our saddles for pillows, taking it by turns to keep watch. The stars shone brightly out overhead, enabling us to see a considerable way from our camp, but as I walked up and down during my watch, I could discern no objects besides our three horses, though I continually cast my eyes round the horizon. I occasionally heard the distant yelp of a pack of coyotes, though they were too far off to be perceived and did not come near enough otherwise to annoy us.

I was thankful when Mr Tidey roused me up. Without waiting for daylight, as we could see our way without difficulty over the prairie and guide ourselves by the stars, having strapped on our packs and slung our rifles over our shoulders, we mounted and rode forward, our animals going much more briskly than they had done on the previous evening. When the sun rose the heat became as great as ever and the poor beasts began to slacken their speed, but eager to get on, we urged them forward with spur and rein until we began to fear that they would break down altogether. Suddenly, however, pricking up their ears and stretching out their necks, they broke into a gallop.

"They smell water, though we can see no signs of it," observed Mr Tidey.

"Yes! dare, dare some trees!" cried Dio.

In a short time we perceived what his sharp sight had previously discovered. It was the bed of a stream. The horses, turning on one side, made their way down the bank to a small hole which as yet contained water, though had we gone straight forward we should not have discovered it, for the greater portion of the bed was perfectly dry. Almost stagnant as the water was, we thankfully quenched our thirst with it, and the horses having drank their fill, we led them again up the bank, where some coarse herbage grew, sufficient to satisfy their hunger. Having tethered them, we sat down to eat the first food we had taken that day. As it was important that the train should obtain water, long before they could reach this supply, we settled to continue our course to the fort.

We had just risen to our feet and were lifting up our saddles to put on our horses' backs, when we saw Dio's animal give a start and almost break its tether; directly afterwards mine, which was feeding near, also started back, and I caught a glimpse of the head and neck of a snake. At the same moment the peculiar sound caused by the tail of the rattle-snake reached our ears. We ran forward, fearing that Mr Tidey's horse might also be bitten, and holding our rifles ready to shoot the creature, but it glided away through the grass, and though we heard its rattle, we could not catch sight of it. We anxiously examined the horses' heads, and found that they had both been bitten on the lip; as, however, they did not appear to suffer, we mounted, hoping that no evil consequences would ensue.

"At all events we must gallop on and get to the fort as soon as possible," said Mr Tidey, "and if we reach it soon, we may be able to apply some remedies to counteract the poison."

For some time our spirited little animals went willingly enough, but at length they both began to flag, and on looking down I saw that their heads and necks had begun to swell. The swelling increased until they were fearfully disfigured, while their nostrils and gums became swollen, and discharged a clear mucus. Still on they went, though their pace became slower and slower, and it was evident that they could only walk with the greatest difficulty. At last we were obliged to dismount, lest they should roll over with us on the ground. On looking at them we found that their eyes were glassy, the pupils greatly dilated, while the hair on their backs seemed literally to stand on end. To mount again would have been useless, but unwilling to abandon them, we led them forward as fast as they could move. Mr Tidey constantly stood up looking out more anxiously than ever for the fort, but no object broke the line of the horizon to the westward. Sometimes we thought that we might possibly have passed it, and then we hoped against hope that we should reach it even now before dark. Still the day wore on, and our poor horses followed us with feeble steps, and it was pitiable to look at them, so swollen and disfigured had they become, their faces resembling hippopotami rather than terrestrial steeds. At last Dio's stumbled and fell; nothing which we could do would induce the poor creature to rise, so we were obliged to leave him to become ere long the prey of the coyotes, should they venture to devour a poisoned animal. Mine, which had perhaps not received so much of the venom in its system as the other, still followed me, but it moved so slowly that I was compelled to lag behind my companions. The sun set and still nowhere could we discover the fort; there seemed every probability that we should have to spend another night on the open prairie, without fire, food, or shelter, or a drop of water to quench our thirst. That my poor animal could survive appeared impossible, and even Mr Tidey's horse suffered greatly.

"It seems doubtful whether my poor brute will be able to move a leg to-morrow, and if so, we shall all three have to trudge forward on foot," he observed.

"Then I would advise you to gallop on at once while there is any daylight, and perhaps you may reach the fort and be able to send us help," I answered.

"No, no, I cannot leave you and Dio alone on the prairie. Should any harm happen to you I should never forgive myself," he answered.

"But by going on alone you may obtain assistance, and in reality serve us more than by remaining behind," I replied. Still I could

not persuade the Dominie to desert us, and we trudged on as before.

Mr Tidey had called Dio to his side and they were some way before me, when I saw them both stop. Dio pointed ahead, while Mr Tidey leaned eagerly forward. Presently a large animal came out of a hollow in which it had previously been concealed. Moving on I saw to my satisfaction that it was one of a herd of tame cattle feeding at the bottom of the hollow. Instead of running away when we approached, they came lowing up, as if well accustomed to the sight of white men.

"Hurrah! the fort cannot be far off unless the herd has strayed away from it," exclaimed Mr Tidey; "at all events it is some encouragement to move forward, and perhaps before long we shall find ourselves among friends."

"It is not likely that we should be able to distinguish the fort at any great distance, but I see a hill rising up against the sky, and perhaps we shall find it in that direction," I observed.

While I was speaking, Mr Tidey's horse made a bolt down the slope, and presently, as the cattle moved aside, I saw a pool of water which, though muddy from the animals having trod in it, afforded a refreshing draught to his poor steed. Mine was too weak even to drink, and I feared that if it once got into the pool it would not have strength to get out again. We now advanced in somewhat better spirits than before. The condition of my horse, however, delayed me; but, in the hopes of obtaining some remedies to save its life, I still led it on. We had not got far when Mr Tidey, who, as usual, was looking about in every direction, exclaimed—

"I see a party of horsemen in the distance. If they are Indians and come near us, we must stop and drive them off. I can count but six; two a-piece, and we each of us must settle one of those as soon as they come within range of our bullets. In the meantime we will keep on as we are going, and if the fort is at hand, it may be that they will think it wise to keep at a distance."

Looking steadily in the direction the Dominie pointed, I could but just discern some figures appearing against the sky above the horizon, but whether Indians or white men I was unable to determine. I kept watching them anxiously. In a short time Dio cried out—

"Dey come dis way! dey come dis way!"

"Never mind, if they come nearer than we like, we must send them to the right-about," observed Mr Tidey calmly.

I could, however, see that the strangers were approaching at a rapid rate, and it would soon be necessary for us to get ready to receive them.

Mr Tidey frequently turned his head over his left shoulder, but still rode on.

"Had we not better stop?" I asked, "they will be down upon us presently."

The Dominie pulled up, and attentively regarded the approaching strangers. "All right!" he exclaimed, "they are friends; I see their uniforms, we shall not have to fight for our lives this time."

In a few minutes the strangers were up to us. They proved to be a scouting party led by a sergeant, and had come out from the fort on learning that a band of Indians on the war-path had been seen in the neighbourhood, but on discovering us they had ridden up to ascertain who we were. The sergeant gave us the satisfactory intelligence that the fort was not half a mile ahead. "You cannot miss it," he observed, "if you keep straight on as you are going, but we must ride round and drive in some cattle which have strayed away, or we shall have them carried off by those thieves of redskins."

We followed the advice of the sergeant; still, though according to our calculation we had gone the distance he had mentioned, we could not in the gloom distinguish the fort. Presently, however, a shot whistled past Mr Tidey's ears, which made him suddenly bob his head, and a voice was heard crying out in an Irish accent—

"Who goes there?"

"Friends, who would be obliged to you to challenge first and shoot if they prove to be enemies," answered the Dominie.

The next instant we found ourselves in front of a stockade above which appeared the roofs of some low buildings, while in front we could distinguish some mounds only a few feet above the level of the plain. On reaching a gate between the mounds, guarded by two stone towers of little more elevation than the stockades, it was opened, and on entering we found several soldiers.

One of them took Mr Tidey's horse, and another was about to take the rein of mine, when he exclaimed—

"What creature have we here? never saw an animal with such a face as this!"

I was explaining what had happened, when a sergeant appeared from the guard-room.

"We will get the doctor to have a look at him, and see if anything can be done for the poor brute," he said in a compassionate tone.

I thanked him. Mr Tidey gave the message from my father, entreating that assistance might be sent to the relief of our train.

"You had better see the commandant, who will judge what is best to be done," was the answer; and leaving our sorry steeds in charge of the soldiers, we accompanied the sergeant. The commanding officer received us kindly, and told us that if the report of Indians being in the neighbourhood should prove true, it was too probable that our train would be attacked.

"I will, however, at dawn to-morrow, send out a party to their assistance," he added, "and I hope that they may arrive in time to drive off the redskins, should any have fallen in with your friends."

We both urged that they might be sent off at once, but the commandant replied that it would be impossible to do so until the party we had met returned with the cattle, as he could not weaken the garrison, already scarcely sufficient for the defence of the place.

With this promise we were obliged to be content, he offering also to supply Dio and me with horses that we might accompany the party, which I hoped to be able to do after some rest, though just then, overcome by hunger and fatigue, I was scarcely able to move. I felt much revived by the supper which the commandant ordered at once to be placed on the table. He afterwards accompanied us out to see how it fared with my poor horse. I found that the doctor had been fomenting its wounded lip with a strong infusion of tobacco, and afterwards poulticing it with the chopped leaves of the same plant. He had also given the animal half a pint of whisky slightly diluted, and half an ounce of ammonia.

"If that doesn't cure it, I don't know what will," he remarked.

I regretted that Dio's horse was too far off to receive assistance—indeed, probably by that time the poor animal was dead. The commandant afterwards took us round the fort, remarking—

"Perhaps before the night is over we may be attacked, and it is as well that you should know the localities."

In the centre were the barracks with the officers' quarters' on one side, the stables on the other, and a barn for the stowage of hay and other stores. Behind us was a yard in which the horses could be turned loose.

From these buildings, four subterranean passages, about three feet wide and five high, led each to a rifle-pit beyond the stockades, about twelve feet long and ten wide, roofed over with stone supported by wood-work.

Just on a level with the ground, below the roof, were loop-holes opening on all sides. In racks round the walls of these pits were placed a number of rifles, all loaded and ready for immediate use; so that, as the commandant explained, should a whole army of redskins approach, the garrison would be at once prepared to give them a warm reception.

The account he gave us of trains stopped and emigrants massacred increased my eagerness to set out to the assistance of our friends. By his advice, therefore, we turned in to try and get some rest. I could not sleep, however, but lay awake listening for the return of the soldiers who had been sent to bring in the cattle; for as the distance was not great, I calculated that they ought to have arrived not long after us, and I began to fear that they must have encountered the Indians, and perhaps themselves have been cut off. Overcome, however, with fatigue, I at length dropped off into a troubled slumber.

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## Chapter Nine.

**The relief party set off—On the prairie—Indians discovered attacking the train—Our charge—No quarter asked nor given—My father and uncle wounded—The train delayed at Fort Hamilton—Provisions run short—A hunting-party arranged—A herd of wapiti—Dog Toby on the sick-list—**

**Chasing the deer—A game at follow my leader—A fight between stags—The mysterious shot—The solitary hunter.**

I was aroused by feeling a hand on my shoulder, and looking up, I saw Mr Tidey by the light of a lamp which burned on the table.

"It will soon be dawn," he said; "the troopers are preparing to set off. But you are knocked up, Mike, and had better sleep on. I should have let you do so, but I did not like to set off without telling you that I was going. I hope, however, that we shall soon meet our friends, and find them all safe and sound."

"I must go!" I cried, jumping up; "the commandant will lend me a horse, as my own is not likely to be of much use, even if the poor brute is still alive."

Notwithstanding the Dominie's expostulations, I was quickly ready. The commandant was on foot. Sympathising with my anxiety, he at once ordered a horse to be saddled for me. The eight troopers who were to accompany us mounted, and directly afterwards a half-breed guide made his appearance.

"He will conduct your train, wherever you may fall in with it, to the nearest stream or water-hole," observed the commandant. "I cannot promise you that your friends have not been attacked, as the Indians are certainly in the neighbourhood, and have carried off some of our cattle; but I trust that, should such be the case, they will hold out until you arrive."

This remark increased my anxiety, and made me more eager than ever to be off. I was looking out for Dio, and was inquiring for him, when he appeared mounted on a little mustang, with a brace of pistols in his belt, a soldier's carbine slung over his back, and a sword by his side.

"Dey no want me to go," he said, "but I say I fight as well as dey."

I said I was very glad he had come, and inquired for my horse, which, to my satisfaction, he informed me was still alive, and that the doctor thought it would recover. I was thankful to have Dio with us, for he was as brave as man could be, and I could rely on him in any emergency. We thus formed a party of twelve, and the troopers considered themselves capable of coping with any Indians we were likely to encounter. The sergeant in command of the party was a cautious man, and,



afraid of knocking up the horses, would not move as fast as I in my impatience desired. We had, however, made good about four or five miles when day dawned. As we moved on, we kept a look-out for Indians on both sides, not knowing in what direction they might appear; but even should they have crossed our course, we could not in the darkness discover their trail. As the light increased, our guide searched diligently for it, but he declared that he could perceive no signs of Indians having recently passed that way, though he observed the trail which we had made on the previous evening. At length I saw some way ahead the wings of several large birds flapping just above the ground. As we drew nearer, six or seven turkey buzzards rose into the air, and circling round flew to a short distance, where they remained watching us. They had been feeding on the body of Dio's horse, utterly indifferent to the venom with which the flesh was impregnated. We kept to windward of it, and directly we had passed the foul birds flew back to their banquet. This showed us that the guide had led us aright, and that we could trust him. Losing patience, I entreated the sergeant to move on faster, reminding him that even should our friends not be attacked by the Indians, they were certainly suffering from want of water. He inquired how far off I calculated we should find the train.

"From fourteen to twenty miles," I answered, "though, as I hope that they may have been able to move on, perhaps they may be still nearer."

He still hesitated, but Mr Tidey joining his entreaties to mine, he put his horse into a gallop, ordering his men to advance. We now moved forward at as fast a rate as I could desire, the guide keeping his eye on the ground. Mile after mile of the level prairie was quickly covered, we in the mean time looking out for the plumed heads of any redskins which might show themselves above the horizon. Noon was approaching. I saw the guide attentively examining the ground.

"Indians have passed this way, but they have swept round again, off to the southward. It would take us much out of our way to follow up their trail, and I think it likely that we shall fall in with it again."

"I hope not," I remarked; "for if so, they may discover our train."

He shrugged his shoulders and said nothing. The ground had now become more uneven than heretofore. Before us rose an undulating hill of no great elevation, but of sufficient height to

prevent us from seeing any distance to the eastward, and we had to rein in our horses as we mounted it. On reaching the top, the sergeant gave the order to halt, unslung his telescope, and swept the horizon from north to south.

"There's the train," he exclaimed, "coming this way, about three miles off." Directly afterwards he added, "and there to the southward I see a troop of mounted Indians; there must be a hundred or more of them. They have discovered the train, and are galloping towards it as fast as their horses can go, hoping, I doubt not, to gain an easy victory."

Borrowing the Dominie's glass, I took a look through it, when to my dismay I perceived that the Indians were much nearer the train than we were, and might have time to swoop down upon it and be off again before we could arrive. My father apparently had not discovered them. While, however, I was still looking through the telescope, I saw the leading waggons stop and the others move up. I had no doubt that my father, having discovered the approaching foe, was preparing to meet them by forming a square. Just then the sergeant cried out—

"We must ride direct for the train, as we shall not be in time to cut off the redskins before they reach it. Forward!"

On we dashed at headlong speed. We had far to go, and in some places the ground was uneven; but if we were to save our friends from being cut to pieces, we must not pull rein until we were up to them. On and on we pressed. The train, formed in square, came in sight to the naked eye, as did the body of Indians who appeared close to it. Except the tramp of our horses over the yielding ground, not a sound was heard, until suddenly some puffs of smoke were seen and the rattle of musketry reached our ears. The Indians halted for an instant, but they were too far off to enable us to see whether or not they shot their arrows at the camp. Again and again the sound of fire-arms was heard, followed by war-whoops which, even at that distance, had a fearful sound. A belt of trees by the side of a dry water-course concealed the Indians from view, and, their eyes being fixed on their expected prey, they had hitherto probably not seen us. Louder and louder grew the noise of fighting, showing us that our friends were still holding out. I knew full well indeed that my father and uncle would fight to the last. Whether they had discovered that succour was at hand, we could not tell. It would not have prevented them from fighting hard, but it would have encouraged the men to hold out till we had reached them.

The sergeant, when he heard the sounds of battle was as eager to press forward as we were. The combatants at length saw us coming. Our own people raised a lusty cheer, while the Indians reined in their steeds, probably supposing, as we galloped on surrounded by clouds of dust, that a large body of cavalry were upon them. Some of the chiefs turned their horses' heads to meet us, but we, charging furiously at them, pistolled some and cut down others, while the rest wheeling round galloped off, hoping to get beyond the reach of our shot. Before, however, they could do so, we pulled up and fired a volley at them, which emptied several saddles. While we were reloading they got out of our reach. The troopers then sweeping over the ground sabred all who had fallen and still showed signs of life. Not a prisoner was taken.

"You came in the nick of time," said my father; "for we were fearfully overmatched, and many had been wounded,—your uncle, I fear, very badly."

I saw to my dismay, as he spoke, that an arrow was sticking in his own side, while Uncle Denis lay under a waggon where he had crawled, his head bleeding, and with two severe wounds in the leg and shoulder. Martin Prentis and three of the other men were also badly hurt. They were all crying out for water, as not a drop remained, and the cattle, they said, could scarcely proceed. My mother, as may be supposed, was fearfully agitated and alarmed, as were the two little girls; but they were cheered by hearing from the guide that a stream existed about two miles on, nearer the fort.

The wearied oxen were therefore at once again yoked up, and we knew that they would eagerly press on the moment they scented the water.

The Dominie and I, aided by my mother, lost no time in attending to the wounded. My father insisted on waiting until Uncle Denis had been looked to, while Dio and Dan gave their aid to the other wounded men.

We first sawed off the head of the arrow sticking in my uncle's shoulder. This done, the shaft was extracted; and his other wounds being bound up, we placed him in one of the waggons.

We had next to perform the same operation on my father, who bore the pain without flinching. He then consented to lie down in the waggon, when, the train being ready, we moved forward, led by the guide.

Soon after we had started, I saw Dio galloping off with a couple of skin bottles over his saddle. My fear was that the Indians would discover him, and cut him off, but he was quickly out of sight. In a wonderfully short time he came galloping back again with both the bottles full.

His arrival was hailed with gratitude by the wounded men. The fresh water he had brought greatly revived them. Even those who had not been hurt were complaining bitterly of thirst. We could scarcely restrain the eagerness of the cattle as they reached the water. The sergeant, however, would not allow us to remain longer than was absolutely necessary to enable the cattle to quench their thirst, stating that his orders were to return as soon as possible to the fort. This indeed, for the sake of my father and uncle and the other wounded men, we were anxious to do.

We kept, as may be supposed, a look-out for the Indians. The lesson they had received, however, had taught them that we were not to be attacked with impunity, but we saw them from time to time hovering in the distance.

Night set in while we were still far from the fort, but the sergeant advising us to keep on, we did so, but it was nearly midnight when we arrived. The commandant received us most kindly, giving up his own room to my mother and her young charges, while my father and Uncle Denis were skilfully treated by the surgeon of the garrison, as were the other wounded men. His opinion was, however, that they would be utterly unfit to continue their journey for some time to come. This was a severe trial to them, as they were anxious to proceed in spite of the dangers we were likely to encounter. The commandant, however, kindly invited us to remain until they were in a fit state to travel.

So effectually had the surgeon treated my horse, that the animal recovered rapidly, and in a couple of weeks, though somewhat thin, was fit for work.

Scouts were daily sent out to watch the movements of the Indians, but the lesson they had received when attacking our train appeared to have produced a good effect, as none were discovered in the neighbourhood. It was hoped, therefore, that they had taken their departure to the southward, and that we might not be molested. The fort was, however, provisioned only for its proper garrison, and as the stores we had brought were nearly exhausted, a difficulty arose about feeding so many additional mouths. Anxious as was the commanding officer to

be hospitable, he could not use the provisions required for his own men. He therefore inquired whether any of our party were hunters, as he could not venture to allow any of his own officers or men to go out in search of game.

"We will start off at once, then, Mike!" said Mr Tidey to me when he heard this, "and soon prove, I hope, that we do not wish to eat the bread of idleness."

Dio begged that he might accompany us, and Dan wished that he might come also; but our mother, fearing the dangers to which we might be exposed, was unwilling to let him go, and he without a word of complaint gave up the idea. The commandant supplied Dio and me with two good horses, and the Dominie had his own, which after a few days' rest was perfectly fit for work.

Taking with us four horses to bring home the game we expected to kill, and followed by Boxer and Toby, we started off. A river, I should have said, flowing from the northward, swept near the fort, and then ran south-west. Although the country immediately round was open, about five or six miles off was, we were told, a forest about ten miles long and several deep, with open glades, in which, as there existed abundance of grass, deer were sure to be found, as well as other animals. We had no difficulty in finding our way, and in a short time came in sight of the borders of the wood.

We of course kept a look-out for Indian trails, but we could discover none. We rode on in full expectation of having good sport. We had not got more than half a mile into the wood, when we caught sight of a dozen or more wapiti feeding in a large glade. To approach them on horseback would be impossible; we therefore dismounted and crept round under shelter of the brushwood, hoping to get within easy shot of them. After going some distance, the glade sweeping round to the left more than we had expected, we found to our disappointment that we could not approach within three hundred yards without being discovered.

"We must return to our horses, and try to reach them from the other side," whispered Mr Tidey. "Do you stay here, Dio, and if they come in this direction you may bring one of them down, but keep back the dogs, unless you see that you with them can turn the herd back towards us."

By keeping on our hands and knees until we ran no risk of being seen by the deer, we regained our steeds, and then rode to the

westward for nearly half a mile, when we once more tied them up and made our way in the same fashion as before towards the herd. By looking through the brushwood we could see them feeding unsuspecting of danger, when just as we expected to be able to bring down a couple, greatly to our disappointment a fine antlered fellow, the watchman of the band, lifted up his head with a startled look, and the whole herd following him moved off. At first we thought that they were going up the glade, but instead of so doing they approached the spot where Dio was concealed. The next instant we heard a shot, and the affrighted herd bounded off at full speed. We saw, however, that one, a fine stag, by the way he moved was wounded, and presently the dogs, let loose by Dio, turned him from the course he was pursuing, and once more he approached us; suddenly he stopped, and, lowering his head, rushed at the dogs, and lifting one in the air threw it on its back. Immediately afterwards, while attempting to treat the other in the same way, down he came on his knees. He was still, however, a formidable antagonist, and might make poor Boxer pay dearly for his boldness. The Dominie rushed forward to the dog's rescue, but as there was a risk of wounding him, as well as the stag, I refrained from firing. The Dominie, more confident, lifted his rifle, and the stag rolled over dead. We ran forward to seize our prize. Dio did not appear.

"He perhaps has gone round to bring up the other horses, or he may hope to get another shot at the herd," observed the Dominie, as he drew out his knife and commenced flaying the deer.

My first impulse was to see how it fared with poor Toby. He licked my hand, and struggled to get on his feet. I was at first afraid that his ribs were broken, but I could discover no wound, and after a few minutes he began to revive, and tried to crawl up to share in the feast Boxer was enjoying. We had nearly completed our task, when we heard another shot, and after a short time Dio appeared at the end of the glade, leading the two horses. He brought the satisfactory intelligence that he had killed another deer. We accordingly packed up the meat, and having placed Toby, who was still unable to walk, on the top of the cargo, guided by Dio we mounted and proceeded to the spot where the animal had fallen. Hitherto the black had been the most successful of the party, but we did not grudge him the honour. We afterwards killed two more deer; the Dominie shot one, and I the other. Our horses laden with the welcome supply, we turned our faces towards the fort.

It was one of several equally successful expeditions we undertook, and so pleased was the commandant with the amount of meat we brought in, that he begged we would remain as long as we pleased, assuring us that we paid amply for whatever other stores we consumed. My father and uncle were now almost recovered, and proposed that we should continue our journey in a few days. Mr Tidey and I agreed in the mean time to make another expedition in search of game, hoping to catch enough to take a supply with us, and leave the remainder with our friends. On this occasion Dan got leave to accompany us, and he, with Dio and Martin Prentis, formed our party. We had three pack-horses, and followed by our two dogs, we set off.

Dan was in high spirits.

"Even if we do fall in with any Indians, we shall be able to give a good account of them, I hope," he said, laughing; "they would be bold fellows to attempt attacking five well-mounted men."

Dan stood up in his stirrups, and looked as big as he could.

Mr Tidey smiled, and observed, "You have the heart of a giant, Dan, though I don't know that a red warrior would reckon you as a man."

"But I can fire a rifle and pistol, and my bullets may tell as well as those of bigger people," answered Dan, a little indignant at the remark.

We had determined to go farther from the fort than we had hitherto done, as the game in the wood we had before hunted in had become scarce, frightened away by the report of our fire-arms. As we proceeded, we found the traces of deer become more and more abundant. Frequently we came suddenly upon one, which started off before we could get a shot. Now and then we caught sight of a long file of antelopes, who, however, took care to keep out of our way, and we might as well have chased the wind as have attempted to overtake them on horseback. It was curious to observe the manner they imitated the movements of their leader. Sometimes he would turn round his white breast, and then exhibit his red flank, when at the same moment a whole line of white breasts or red flanks were to be seen. Then he would stop, when they would all stop at once; then he would stamp and advance a step, they all, obedient to the signal, doing the same. The Dominie remarked that it reminded him of when he was at school and he and his companions played follow my leader. Again the headmost

animal would wheel to the right, as did his followers. At last, carrying on this game for some time, they suddenly winded us and away they all scampered as fast as their agile legs would carry them, like clouds before the gale.

Although game was thus abundant on the open prairie, we were as well aware that we should not load our horses, unless we took proper measures to get near the deer; as the angler is, who sees the fish leap through the calm surface of a lake in the bright sunshine, that he will not fill his basket if he does not use the right bait.

There was a wood away to the right, which would, we hoped, afford us an ambush and enable us to conceal our steeds. We accordingly rode towards it. As we were moving along the Dominie suddenly pulled up.

"Look at that trail," he said; "that is not the foot-mark of a deer, or buffalo, or a wolf. If ever I saw the print of a moccasin, that is one. See, however, the toes are pointing from the wood, though the red-skin, when he found that he was stepping on soft ground, sprang back, but probably did not think it worth while to obliterate the mark."

"Possibly there was only a single hunter, and he can do us no harm, even if he should desire it," I observed; "perhaps indeed, that is the print of a white man's foot, for many wear moccasins, even in summer."

We searched about, but although we discovered several marks which we believed were produced by human feet, we could not be certain. Had an Indian been with us he would have solved the question in a minute. We therefore remounted, and believing that we were not likely to fall in with enemies, continued our course.

We soon reached the wood, which was very similar in character to the one we had before hunted in, with an undergrowth of willows near a stream, while in other places were clumps of wild rose trees, still covered with bloom. Penetrating into the wood, we selected a spot for our camp, where we could leave our horses under charge of Martin and Dan while we went in search of game. In a short time we reached the borders of a glade, in which, from the appearance of the grass, we hoped to see some deer browsing.

After proceeding some distance we caught sight of a herd at the farther end coming leisurely own towards us, cropping the grass



on their way. The wind blowing from them to us, we settled to remain concealed behind some thick bushes until they should come within range of our rifles. Presently a fine stag advanced ahead of the herd. He halted when still too far off to give us a hope of killing him. His movements were singular, as he pawed the ground and butted with his horns. The reason of this was soon apparent, for from the opposite side another stag issued forth from among the trees, and advanced rapidly towards him. On seeing his antagonist, the first rushed to meet him, and the two stags engaged in a fierce combat. We might possibly have got close enough to shoot both, but by so doing we should have lost our chance of killing any of the rest of the herd, whose flesh was of more value than that of the old stags.

We were waiting the issue of the battle, supposing that the deer would then approach, when we heard a shot and caught sight of a number of animals scampering across the glade. The report of the gun came from an opposite direction to that of our camp. For an instant I thought that Dio must have crept away, but looking round I saw that he was close to us, the shot must therefore have been fired by a stranger, who could not have been aware of our vicinity. Fearing to lose the stags, we sprang forward; at the same time our two dogs dashed out. Mr Tidey aimed at one of the animals and I at the other. Though both fell, each creature, under the belief that his hurt had been received from his antagonist, though brought to the ground, continued to butt furiously at the other, until the dogs came up, and they turned their rage towards them. We stopped to reload and call off the dogs, for fear of their being injured. But the stags were fast succumbing from loss of blood; and getting up to them, we put an end to their struggles.

We were still standing over their bodies, forgetting for a moment the shot we had heard, when Dio shouted out—

“See dare, see dare!”

Looking up the glade, we saw a man in hunter’s garb, who, having sprang out of the wood, had seized by the horns a wounded deer which was endeavouring to escape. The animal was making violent efforts to release itself, throwing back its head in a way which made it difficult for him to hold on. To protect himself he lifted up his rifle; one of the deer’s hoofs missed him, but the other struck his weapon, and breaking his ramrod, brought him down on his knees. The creature was now about to renew the attack and a blow from his hoof might have shattered his skull, or at least have seriously injured him. Not a moment was to be lost. Scarcely thinking of the danger I ran of

wounding the stranger, I lifted my rifle and fired, when the deer bounding up fell lifeless on its back. The stranger, rising from his knees, advanced towards us. He was a good-looking youngish man, though his face, naturally fair, was bronzed by summer suns and winter blasts. He was dressed in a blue blanket coat trimmed with red, a cloth cap of the same colour, with a broad peak, and ornamented moccasins. An axe and long knife were stuck in his belt; he had a serviceable-looking rifle in his hand, and behind his shoulders was strapped a pack, containing his buffalo robe and blanket, some provisions apparently; and several other requisite articles. He put out his hand in a frank manner as he walked up to Mr Tidey.

"You have done me a service, friend; for that animal showed more fight than I expected, and might have injured me severely had not your shot taken effect, though it narrowly missed my head, I suspect."

"Very glad to have been of use to you, but here's the person you should thank," said the Dominie, pointing to me.

"I confess that it would have been more prudent not to have fired, for fear of hitting you," I answered as he shook me by the hand.

"Though it was a risk, I am equally thankful. The shot was well aimed, and you have the right to the venison, my young friend," he said, looking at me.

We told him that we had no wish to deprive him of it, but he insisted that the deer should be ours. We settled the point, however, by making him take a haunch, which was all he would accept.

We now sent off Dio to bring up the horses, that we might load them with the meat: we in the meantime set to work to flay and cut up the animals, assisted by the stranger.

"You will come to our camp and pass the night with us," said the Dominie as we were thus engaged.

To our surprise the stranger declined our invitation.

"I should prove but a poor companion, for I have been too long accustomed to live by myself to have any desire to join the society of my fellows," he answered, turning aside; "if I find that you are exposed to danger from the redskins, I will give

you warning, and may be of assistance in enabling you to escape from them."

We in vain pressed him to alter his decision. He waited until the horses arrived, and having assisted us in packing the meat, took his own share, put up in a piece of skin, and after bidding us farewell went off in an opposite direction to our camp. We had forgotten to mention the mark of the moccasin we had seen in the morning, but we had little doubt that the stranger had gone over the ground, and our apprehensions of Indians being in the neighbourhood were dispelled. We, however, kept as usual a strict watch at night. As our camp was placed in the recesses of the wood, we knew that our fire could not be perceived at any distance beyond it.

As we sat round the cheerful blaze of the fire, we naturally talked of the stranger, wondering who he could be. His dress was that of a Canadian trapper, but he spoke without any French accent, and the Dominie remarked that he recognised a touch of the Irish brogue on his tongue.

"It is odd that he should prefer camping out by himself, to joining us, when he might sleep in much greater security than he can all alone," I observed.

"Tastes differ, and although it is not complimentary to us, he may prefer his own society to ours," answered the Dominie, laughing.

"Perhaps he is on bad terms with the garrison of the fort, and consequently does not wish to associate with us, because we have been staying there," remarked Dan.

"It may be that he has shot one of them, or sided with the Indians, or has committed some offence against the Government," said Martin.

"We might talk all night, and yet come to no satisfactory conclusion," replied the Dominie, "and now, it's time to turn in, to be ready for our work to-morrow morning."

We accordingly lay down wrapped in our blankets round the fire, Martin taking the first watch.

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## Chapter Ten.

**A timely warning—The pursuit—Indian horsemen—The cavalry engagement—A sharp skirmish—Dio saves my father's life—Preparations for continuing our journey—I encounter the solitary hunter—Useful information—Rejoin the train—First sight of the mountains—The "grosse corne"—Looking out for a pass—Mouth of the cañon discovered—A gloomy passage—Overtaken by darkness in the gorge—First glimpse of "Smiling Valley"—Selection of the site of our future home—Bringing the waggons over the mountains.**

The stars were shining brightly in the sky, the fire casting a glare on the trunks and branches of the surrounding trees beyond which was darkest gloom, when having been aroused by the Dominie, I took the morning watch.

No sound broke the stillness which reigned through the forest at that period of the night. Feeling still drowsy, and afraid of dropping off to sleep again should I sit down, I continued pacing backwards and forwards, now approaching one side of the glade, now the other, occasionally giving the fire a poke, or throwing on a few sticks. Though I had no fear of Indians, a bear or panther, or a pack of hungry wolves, might pay us a visit, attracted by the smell of the venison which was packed and ready for transport. As the trees shut out the view to the eastward, I could only judge when day was approaching by observing the stars beginning to grow dim. I had gone farther than usual from the camp-fire, towards the west, when, as I stopped for a moment, I thought I heard a sound among the underwood in that direction, as of branches pushed aside and feet pressed on dry leaves.

Expecting to see some animal break through, I brought my gun ready to shoot, when much to my surprise a man stepped forth from out of the darkness.

Supposing him to be an Indian and that he might be followed by a number of others with scalping-knives in their hands, I slowly retreated, holding my gun ready for action.

"Do not fire, my friend," said a voice which I recognised as that of the stranger we had met the previous day. "I come as I promised, to give you warning should you be in danger. I have discovered that a party of redskins are out on the war-path, and that you are certain to fall in with them should you continue hunting. I would advise you forthwith to saddle your horses and return to the fort."

I thanked the stranger for his information and instantly aroused my companions; he repeated what he had said to Mr Tidey, advising him to lose no time in starting.

"I will guide you by the shortest cut out of the wood," he said; "after that you must push on as fast as your horses can go, and you may keep ahead of the savages, who are now away to the westward, but will soon discover your trail, and seeing that you are a small party, will be certain to follow you up." The idea for a moment glanced across my mind that perhaps the stranger wished to get rid of us, for the sake of having all the sport to himself, but his frank air and the earnest tone in which he spoke made me banish the suspicion. Without a moment's delay all hands set to work to get ready for starting, our friend energetically assisting us. Our pack-animals were soon ready and our steeds saddled.

"Now we will be off," said the stranger, and going ahead he led the way, winding in and out among the trees at so rapid a rate, that we could with difficulty keep him in sight. Every now and then he turned, however, to ascertain that we were following. He evidently seemed to consider that not a moment was to be lost. At length the border of the wood was gained.

"You can make your way now by yourselves," he said; "the dawn will soon break, and the rising sun will serve to guide you. Keep slightly to the right, and you will pass the confines of the next wood. The ground is even for some miles, and if you press forward as fast as your horses can go, I trust that you may keep ahead of your enemies. They are sure to discover your trail, and therefore, although you may not see them, when looking behind, you must not venture to halt. Whether they intend to attack the fort, I cannot say, but it is as well that the garrison should be on the alert."

We thanked him heartily for the important service he had rendered us.

"But will you not come with us," said Mr Tidey; "you yourself may be exposed to danger from the Indians."

"I have been too long in their territory to have any fear on that score, and know their ways well enough to avoid them," he answered; "but time is precious; give your horses the rein. On, on!"

Waving his hand as a farewell, he retreated again into the wood: when I again looked round he was not to be seen. We

galloped forward, the Dominie, Martin, and Dio leading the pack-animals, which as they were lightly laden, kept up with us; Dan and I rode alongside each other ahead of the rest.

"This is capital fun!" cried my young brother; "I would not have missed it on any account. I only wish that fine fellow had been with us, and should we be overtaken by the Indians; we might face about and drive them back."

"If we are overtaken, we shall have to do that at all events," I replied; "but I hope that we may not be compelled to fight them, and I have no wish to hear their war-whoops in our rear."

I was not at all certain, however, that those unpleasant sounds would not reach our ears before we gained the fort. I knew the rate at which the half-naked savages could scour across the prairie, and when once they got on our trail, they would, I was convinced, press on at their utmost speed. But darkness favoured us for some time, though we ran the risk of one of our horses stepping into a hole or stumbling over the skeleton of a buffalo or deer, numbers of which strewed the plain. At length the first streaks of dawn appeared ahead; the light rapidly increased and the sun which was to guide us rose above the horizon.

Our horses kept up their speed, seeming to be well aware that an enemy was behind them. My eyes being dazzled by the bright beams of the sun, I could scarcely see the way, and had to shade them with my hand, while I bent forward towards my horse's neck.

After a few seconds I made out the wood on our left, and knew that we were pursuing a right course.

Few words were exchanged by any of the party: at last Dan cried out that he was getting very hungry, and proposed to stop for breakfast.

"Our scalps are of more value than the refreshing of our inward man," answered the Dominie. "We must not think of breakfast, dinner, or supper, until we get inside the fort, and then we will take all three in one. Go on, lads, go on."

Urging on our horses, we had already reached the ground over which we had previously hunted on our first expedition, and knew the way perfectly, but still the fort was far distant, and we could not yet distinguish the flag which waved above it.

"We shall get in safe enough now, and perhaps be laughed at for running away from an imaginary foe," cried Dan.

I was about to answer, when Dio, who had turned in his saddle to look behind him, exclaimed—

"Dare am de Indians. I see de heads of dem an' de horses 'bove de green grass far 'way."

We all looked, to be certain that the black was right. There could be no doubt about the matter. To escape them by concealing ourselves was impossible, even though the sun might have prevented them as yet from seeing us.

They had got hold of our trail and were following that up. All we could do was to trust to the fleetness of our steeds and endeavour to reach the fort before they should overtake us. Martin proposed that we should let go the laden animals as they detained us considerably.

"We will not do that until the enemy are much nearer than they are now," answered the Dominie. "On, boys, on! we will still keep ahead of them."

We used our spurs and whips to encourage our poor beasts, which were already showing signs of "knocking-up."

From a glance I took of the pursuing foe, I saw that they were a large band, against whom it would be useless to make a stand. If overtaken they would to a certainty kill us for the sake of our scalps. They were getting nearer and nearer; I looked out anxiously for the fort. At length the flag appeared in sight; it was a cheering spectacle.

"Oh, massa, massa, go on!" I heard Dio cry out in an anxious tone. I turned round; it seemed to me that already the savages were almost near enough to reach us with their arrows. None of us required urging, but our panting beasts could scarcely keep their legs. A few moments more and we might have a shower of missiles whizzing about our heads. On we went until we could see the top of the stockades and the buildings in the fort. Still the Indians followed, their dreadful war-whoop burst on our ears, making our horses tremble. It was enough to do so, for no more terrific sound had I ever heard. At length, when it seemed that we had no chance of escaping, I saw the gate of the fort open, and a party of horsemen streaming forth came galloping towards us: the Indians saw them too. They approached, and as they did so opened their ranks to let us pass through them, and

then with a loud cheer, dashing forward, they charged the enemy. The savages wheeled and fled, but before the troopers could get up to them the recall was sounded. The commandant evidently well knew the danger of pursuing so wily a foe, who only fled that they might turn round at a favourable moment, or that they might lead their pursuers into an ambush. Soon after the trumpet-call had been heard and the cavalry had begun to retire, a far larger band than those who had followed us appeared on the brow of a hill about half a mile to the southward.

One of the men cried out that, from their dress and appearance, they were Cheyennes and Arapahoes, first-rate horsemen. We could see them clearly against the sky flourishing their spears, their chiefs riding backwards and forwards in front of their ranks, evidently encouraging them to come on and attack us. These "buffalo Indians," as they are called, from spending their time in chase of the shaggy monsters of the prairie, are accustomed to the saddle from their childhood. They use no reins, but guide their horses by pressing their heels on whichever side they wish them to turn, consequently both hands and arms are free to use their weapons as may be requisite. They carry long spears and powerful bows, which can shoot their arrows to a great distance, and in their belts tomahawks, with which they can deal the most deadly blows in a hand to hand combat. In battle they secure themselves to their saddles, so that they can bend down on their horses' sides, and thus entirely hide themselves from the view of their enemies, as they dash forward in the fight, thus also avoiding the bullets aimed at them. Even when wounded they are carried away off the field, unless their steeds are shot down. Our small party of retreating cavalry did not at first perceive the enemy gathering in their rear, until the trumpet again sounded, when they halted and faced about. It was not a moment too soon. Scarcely had they done so, than down swept the savages like a whirlwind towards them, led by a tall chief with a plume of dark feathers waving above his head, on a white horse, whooping and shrieking in the most diabolical manner. We could see their faces through our glasses, and fierce and terrible they looked, as they held their lances poised, or their bows bent ready to shoot as they got within range. Our rear-guard, who were acting as skirmishers, fired, and then fell back on the main body, with the exception of two or three, who as they were retreating fell pierced by arrows shot at them from the ranks of the approaching enemy. Our cavalry were far outnumbered.



On came the savages, a flight of arrows filled the air, and then, with reiterated whoops and shrieks, the Indians swooped down upon us. With sorrow, not unallied with dismay, we saw several of our friends fall from their saddles, while every trooper was engaged in a deadly struggle with a dozen foes. Amid the smoke of the fire-arms, we could see the spears thrusting, sabres and tomahawks gleaming, pistols flashing, horses plunging and rearing, while shouts and cries rent the air. It was too evident that our party were getting the worst of it and were being forced back, over the ground towards the fort. Fresh hordes were seen coming on, probably those who had before retreated. Again the trumpet sounded the recall. The commandant now summoned every available man in the fort; some to garrison the pits, others to advance to the support of the cavalry.

We had dismounted and were soon joined by my father and Uncle Denis, with about twenty men led by the commandant himself. We advanced rapidly in two parties, so as to allow the troopers to pass between us. My father took command of one of the parties. As we advanced we could see horses and men struggling on the ground, many pierced through and through with arrows; the tall chief stooping down from his horse, seized one poor fellow and lifting him up, struck him a deadly blow with his tomahawk and then hurled him back lifeless.

Some of the troopers, unable to extricate themselves, were still fighting bravely and dearly selling their lives, while those who could, obeying the recall, came galloping back. The Indians, now seeing us advance, the tall chief, dashing forward, with poised spear, was about to pierce my father, when Dio lifted his rifle and fired. The warrior bent forward, the blood gushing from his mouth, but still coming on, when the black, seizing the sabre of a fallen soldier, struck him on the side and his body fell, his hands touching the ground, while his legs remained lashed to the saddle. The cross-fire, which, at the word of command, was poured in on the ranks of the savages, stopped their onward course. A successful attempt was made, however, to recover the body of their chief, and his horse though wounded, wheeling round, was seized by one of the band and carried off, in spite of the bullets aimed at him. We continued pouring in volley after volley, until the Indians were beyond our range, but our men fired too high and but few saddles were emptied after the retreat began.

The battle had been terribly severe, and we had to mourn the loss of nearly a dozen men killed and as many wounded. Those

who had fallen were dreadfully mutilated by the savages. Horses and riders had been stripped of their trappings and clothes, most of the men scalped, with terrible gashes on their bodies, while all around, the trampled blood-stained ground showed the fierce struggle which had taken place before our brave fellows had succumbed. Severe as had been our loss, a still greater number of the Indians must have been killed, although the majority had been carried out. None of our party who had gone out on foot had suffered, shewing how much wiser it would have been had the garrison remained in the fort, without attempting to pursue the enemy. The object of the commandant, however, had been to drive the savages to a distance, and to show them that the white men were as ready to meet them in the open, as within the protection of the stockades.

We watched the enemy as they rode slowly back over the hill, carrying their dead and wounded. Though defeated, we could not be at all certain that they would not renew the attack during the night. The belief, however, was, that dispirited by the loss of their chief, they would, with blackened faces, be mourning for his death and that of the rest of the warriors who had fallen, instead of thinking of more fighting.

"It is sad work," observed my father, as we returned from burying our poor fellows; "the Indians act, of course, according to their instinct, and consider themselves justified in attacking the forts and trains of the white men, whom they see advancing to take possession of their hunting-grounds. I wish that means could be found to induce them to remain at peace with us, but though over and over again they have signed treaties they have broken through them whenever they have fancied that they could gain an advantage by so doing. I do not mean to say for one moment that the white men are not to blame; they have too often deceived the Indians and have driven them without compunction from the region they once called their own. If I could discover a tribe whose confidence in the pale-faces, as they call us, has not been abused, I would settle down among them and endeavour by kindness and justice to work upon their better feelings and induce them to become friends."

The garrison remained under arms during the night, but it passed off in quietness, and the next day the scouts who went out reported that the enemy had moved off to a distance. It was hoped that their chief, who had instigated them to attack the fort, being dead, they would be inclined in the future to leave it unmolested.

We were now all fully prepared to continue our journey, still, anxious as was my father to proceed, he was unwilling to expose my mother and the rest of us to the dangers we might have to encounter. On finding that the country to the westward was at present free from hostile Indians, we made several hunting expeditions, by which we supplied ourselves and the fort with fresh provisions. While one day in chase of a deer which I had wounded, I got separated from my companions. The animal plunged into a willow brake, and I thought had escaped me. Finding, however, an opening in the wood, I made my way through it, on the chance of coming again upon the deer. Calculating the course it was likely to take, I pushed forward so as to cross it. Coming upon several splashes of blood, which showed me the direction the deer had gone, I was following up the trail, when just before me a person rose suddenly from behind a bush, and to my surprise I recognised the solitary hunter. I rode towards him, putting out my hand: "I am glad to meet you again," I said; "though I little expected to do so: I wish to thank you for the warning you gave us; had it not been for you, we should probably have been killed by the Indians."

"I require no thanks," he answered somewhat coldly.

"We gave the Cheyennes and Arapahoes a lesson they will not forget, and have been able to hunt since without fear of interruption," I observed.

I asked him whether he considered that our train could pass on towards the Rocky Mountains without the risk of being attacked.

"If you make haste, you may get through; but you must not idle on the way," he answered; "the savages have united in a grand expedition against the forts to the southward, and although they will probably be defeated, it will give them employment for some time to come."

This was satisfactory intelligence. I thanked him for it. I then asked him if he had seen a wounded deer pass that way.

"There lies your game," he answered, leading me forward, where behind a bush I saw the animal I had wounded. "I was employed in cutting it up when you appeared," he added; "although I brought it to the ground, your shot enabled me to kill it, and it is therefore yours. I will help you to load your horse with the meat."

I in vain attempted to induce him to take the whole or a portion. "No, no," he answered, "I have but one mouth to feed, while you have a garrison to support," and he continued his task.

"You may have some difficulty in finding your companions," he observed, when my horse was loaded; "I will lead you to them."

We set off together. After going some distance he stopped, and, shaking me by the hand, said—

"Go on there, you will soon find your friends; but you need not mention having met with me."

This remark convinced me more than ever that the stranger had some reason for not wishing to have any intercourse with the garrison. I wished him "good-bye," and he plunging into the forest, I soon rejoined my companions.

We returned with a large supply of venison. My father, to whom I privately communicated the information I had received from the stranger, announced his intention of setting out next morning.

The harness during our stay had been put in good order. My horse, thanks to the remedies applied by the surgeon, had completely recovered, and we purchased another for Dio.

Everything being ready at the time appointed, we recommenced our journey, saluted by the cheers of the garrison. Our course was now towards the north-west, which would lead us across the Laramie plains, over a range of the Rocky Mountains, beyond which my father expected from the report of hunters and trappers to find a fertile region, in which he would be content to establish himself. We had added, I should have said, two light carts, in which we intended to transport the cargoes of the waggons, should we find it impossible to drag them when laden over the heights. As we travelled on I fully expected to fall in with the stranger, but day after day went by and he did not make his appearance. Following the advice given, we halted only to rest our animals. On such occasions we employed the time in hunting, and seldom returned without a supply of either buffalo meat or venison. The Indians we met with appeared disposed to be friendly, or at all events, seeing our large well-armed party, and the vigilant watch we kept, they did not venture to interfere with us. We were approaching the range it was our purpose to cross. We had heard that many of the heights were of great elevation, but that there were passages or

cañons between them, through which we might make our way, provided no enemy should appear to impede our progress. We had during the last day caught sight of what appeared a bank of white clouds, their outer edges lighted up by the rays of the sun. During, however, the next couple of days' journey a light mist hung over the country, which prevented us from seeing objects at a distance. Having no longer the fear of Indians, the Dominie, Dan, and I frequently went ahead, sometimes on horseback and sometimes on foot, for the purpose of killing game or exploring the way. Thus one day, the ground being rugged and the waggons making but slow progress, we had proceeded some distance further than usual when we caught sight, on the top of a rock, of an animal with long horns, which Dan declared was a sheep, and which I thought was a deer.

"Dan is more nearly right, for it is the sheep of these mountains, but in its habits it is very like the chamois of Switzerland," observed the Dominie; "we have very little chance of getting that fellow, but we may kill others if we are on the watch for them. It is the big-horn, or 'grosse corne,' as the French call it, of the Rocky Mountains. It has already seen us, and away it goes to some place where it knows we cannot reach it."

I may as well say that this wild sheep is of stout build, and has feet stronger and larger than those of the deer. Its light dusky brown colour is similar to the tint of the rocks among which it lives. About its ears and neck and legs it carries a small quantity of wool, the rest of its coat consisting of coarse hair, white on the rump, while the tail is tipped with black. Both the male and female have horns, those of the former being remarkable for their enormous size, while those of the latter somewhat resemble the horns of the ordinary goat. The horns of some of the sheep we afterwards killed measured upwards of two feet six inches in length. The head is provided with cartilaginous processes of great strength, and they with the frontal bone form one strong mass of so solid a nature that the animal can, when making his escape, fling himself on his head from considerable heights without injury.

We watched the big-horn as it bounded away, until it speedily disappeared.

Almost immediately afterwards the mist lifted, and we saw before us a range of mountains with a snow-capped peak, apparently of great elevation, rising beyond them, while at their foot slept a lake of clear water, shining like a polished mirror in the rays of the sun.

"What! shall we have to cross all those mountains?" exclaimed Dan, "we shall be brought to a stand-still, I fear."

"We shall have to get through them somehow or other, but I hope that a passage may be found up a cañon, between the rocky heights, so that we shall not be compelled to climb over their tops," answered Mr Tidey. "The sooner, however, we get back to camp and look out for the required pass the better. It may take us some days, and as the season is advancing there is no time to be lost."

We accordingly turned back, and on reaching the train found that the mountains were as clearly visible as from where we had first seen them. Near at hand was a rocky height, to the top of which my father and uncle climbed with us, carrying their spy-glasses that they might take a view of the range, and endeavour to discover some opening through which we might hope to make our way.

"Others have gone through yonder rocky barrier, and so may we," said my father, sweeping the range from north to south with his telescope. After surveying the mountain for some time, he exclaimed, "I see what looks like a cañon where the cliffs appear to rise almost perpendicularly out of the plain. We will direct our course towards it. We shall not reach it to-night, but we will explore it with our carts to-morrow morning, while we leave the waggons in a safe position, so that they may be effectually defended should any Indians venture to attack them, though I have no apprehensions on that score."

The plan being arranged, we returned to the train, and, verging to the right, moved towards the gap my father had discovered. We reached one end of the lake which we had seen in the morning, and as the sun had already disappeared over the mountains, a halt was called, and we encamped in our usual fashion. We chose a spot with the lake to the south; on one side a rocky height rose precipitously out of the water, on the other was a thick wood; we had thus two sides of the camp strongly defended by nature, and by throwing up a breastwork round the other two sides the camp might be made as strong as could be required. Although an enemy might climb to the top of the rock, yet by posting a couple of men there with rifles, it might be defended against a whole host of foes. The wood being but a short distance off from which the timber required could be obtained, all hands setting to work, before dark the camp was as strongly fortified as we thought requisite.

It was the first time for many days that we had enjoyed a feeling of perfect security. Dio had lighted a fire a little apart from that of the men, that its smoke might keep off the flies, which were inclined to be troublesome. To utilise it, he had hung up one of our pots to boil. Kathleen, being somewhat tired, was asleep in our waggon, while my mother and Lily were seated on the ground near it. Boxer and Toby lay a short distance off, as Lily said, looking at themselves in the lake, into which the oxen, having taken their fill of the luscious grass growing on the bank, had come down to drink.

My father, accompanied by Dan and me, having made a circuit of the camp, to see that all was right, had just joined my mother. Dio, who had been attending to the pot, drew my father aside, to propound some knotty point with regard to the waggon which was under his especial charge, while Dan threw himself down by our mother, to have a game of play with Lily, Rose and Biddy being at a little distance off, busily washing clothes in the lake and singing at the top of their voices, the one a negro, the other an Irish melody, the result, as may be supposed, far from melodious, each stopping, however, every now and then to exchange jokes with the men who happened to be passing near them.

That evening-scene in our camp near the mountains made an impression on me, which is as vivid at the present day as then, and I describe it more perhaps for my own gratification than for any it may afford the readers of my journal.

The next morning we set off on our expedition, Martin Prentis being left in charge of the camp. Our exploring party consisted of my father, Uncle Denis, Mr Tidey, Dan, and I, Dio, and two of the men. My mother begged that she might go with us, and as she would not leave the two little girls behind, Biddy came to assist in taking care of them. We carried one tent, with provisions and everything requisite for forming a camp, so that we might send the empty carts back to bring on more stores, should we find that we could not get the heavy waggons through. Though the ground at a distance appeared to be level, we had a considerable ascent to make before we reached the foot of the cliffs. As we looked ahead, it seemed impossible that we should ever get through the massive rocks piled up before us, but my father, confident that an opening would be found, persevered, and at length we saw some way off, what looked a mere cleft in the rock.

"That's the mouth of the cañon," he exclaimed, "though it seems so narrow, it is wide enough for our cart-wheels and that is all we require."

We eagerly pressed forward and in a short time entered a gloomy defile where the rocks towered up on either side, and in some places hung completely over our heads, but as they had stood for centuries, we had no fear of their tumbling down while we were passing beneath them.

On and on we went, the rocks becoming higher and higher, and forming precipitous cliffs, their summits many hundred feet above us. It was evident that the mountain had been rent asunder by some mighty earthquake without the assistance of water.

The ground on which we travelled rose but slightly. As we continued our course the scenery became more gloomy and barren, and, except on the ground beneath our feet, scarcely a blade of grass or plant of any description was to be seen growing in the clefts of the dark and sombre rocks. The atmosphere, seldom warmed by the rays of the sun, felt chilly in the extreme, and depressed our spirits, and had it not been for the assurance of my father, that we should discover an outlet on the other side, some of the party would, I think, have turned back, under the belief that we should only arrive at last before some vast cavern, or towering cliff, beyond which all further progress would be barred. Even the Dominie, I saw, did not half like it, but he was too much attached to my father to hesitate about proceeding. Our chief anxiety was about water, as yet not a single cascade had we met with, nor the smallest rivulet trickling down the sides of the mountains. So lofty were the rocks, that we could nowhere see even the tops of the mountains above us. We concluded that we were at some distance from the snowy peak we had discovered the day before, which would probably have sent down a stream to afford us the water we required. We stopped to rest at noon, where the gorge opened out slightly and the ground bore a sufficient amount of grass to enable our horses to crop a scanty meal. As we were anxious to get into a more fertile region before nightfall, we did not remain longer than was necessary. The shades of evening came on far sooner than would have been the case in the plain. The cliffs rose on every hand, towering as high, or even higher, than at the entrance of the gorge. Unwilling to encamp in a place where we could get neither fire nor water, Mr Tidey and I volunteered to push on ahead, hoping that we might find a pleasanter spot for camping than in the



narrow defile, even though we might not succeed in altogether emerging from the pass. We hurried on as long as a ray of light penetrated into the gorge, but at length it became so dark that we could scarcely see a yard before us. Were we to proceed further we might knock our heads against a rock or fall into some yawning chasm.

"Stop, Mike!" said my companion, "better to suffer present evil, than to rush into greater we know not of. We must return to our friends, if we don't break our heads in the meantime, and advise them forthwith to come to a halt."

So pitchy was the darkness, that we could not see the rocks on either hand, and we were afraid, should we stumble or turn round by any chance, that we might be going away from, instead of nearing our friends. In vain we looked up to catch sight of a star by which we might have guided ourselves, but not a single one could we see.

"It won't do to halt here," observed the Dominie; "depend upon it, the captain has come to a stand-still long ago."

Every now and then we stopped and shouted as we groped our way forward, but no answer came, and at last I began to picture to myself all sorts of accidents which might have happened to my family. Perhaps their footsteps had been dogged by the Indians, or a rock had fallen and crushed them, or the horses, suffering from want of water, had sunk down exhausted.

When I mentioned my apprehensions to Mr Tidey, he laughed at me, and tried to dispel them. "The thing is, Mike, we came over the road in daylight, and we are now going back in the dark, and whereas we were walking four miles an hour, we are now progressing at a quarter that speed."

Still, I was not convinced, and dreaded that at any instant we might come upon the dead bodies of our friends.

Again and again I shouted out. How my heart bounded when I at length heard my father's cheery voice replying to our hail. Turning an angle of the pass I saw the light of a fire, by the side of which I could distinguish the carts, the white tent, and the figures of our friends. Guided by the blaze, we soon reached the little encampment. My father and Uncle Denis were as glad to get us back as we were to return, though we had no satisfactory intelligence to communicate. Dio had found some bushes, from which the fuel for our fire had been procured and what was of of

equal consequence, a small pool of water, to which our thirsty cattle had been led to drink.

"Had we pushed on we should have missed it, so that we must not grumble at being detained in the pass," observed my father.

"Provided no storm comes on until we are clear of it," remarked Uncle Denis; "however, we will not anticipate evils."

So soundly did I sleep, after the fatigues of the evening, that Uncle Denis had to give me a pretty rough shake, and then looking up, I saw that it was daylight overhead, though it was still almost dark in the depths of the pass.

We lost no time, as soon as breakfast was over, in moving on, hoping that before long we should emerge into the open country. For hours we trudged on, ascending but slightly, and the horses had no difficulty in dragging up the carts, when suddenly the bright glare of daylight appeared before us and we found ourselves looking down on a broad valley bathed in sunlight, but with another range of mountains beyond. The sides sloped gradually towards a sparkling stream which flowed at the bottom, clothed with rich vegetation. Was this valley to be our home, or were we to cross the second range, into a still more fertile region?

"This is just the sort of spot we have been looking for, and I hope my father will stop here!" I exclaimed to Mr Tidey, with whom I was walking.

"Very good possibly, but where are we to find a market for our produce? Unless there is a pass through the second range, no emigrant trains are likely to come this way, and I do not think your father or any other sensible man would wish to exclude himself from the rest of the world, though undoubtedly we might manage to exist if big-horns, and deer, and buffalo are to be found in the neighbourhood."

When my father came up, he stopped and surveyed the valley.

"Its beauty consists in its contrast to the dark gorge we have passed through," he remarked; "see those black rocks cropping up in all directions through the grass: the soil is of but little depth, and we could nowhere find an acre of arable land."

Uncle Denis agreed with him, but observed that it would be as well to camp in the valley, for the sake of giving the horses a

good feed, while we searched a passage either through or over the next range.

I should occupy too much space, were I minutely to describe the next few days' journey, the steeps we climbed up, the descents we made, now keeping along the edge of a roaring torrent, now ascending by the brink of precipices, over which there appeared a great risk of the carts and horses falling to the bottom.

Still we worked our onward way, my father being confident that we should encounter no insuperable obstacles. We had climbed to a height early in the day, from which, through his glass, he had obtained a view over the region we had to pass. Though wild and rugged in the extreme, it was of no great elevation.

"If we cannot get through in one direction, we may in another," he remarked.

Twice we had to return for some distance the way we had come, but perseverance conquered all difficulties, and at length we gained a ridge, far away beyond which we saw stretching a magnificent country, a stream flowing down from the mountains, a wide extent of prairie, a shining lake, and an extensive forest, with trees of giant growth. We had only to descend to take possession of any spot on which we might fix for our future residence. The stream and lake would afford us fish, herds of deer browsed on the rich grass, and far away we caught sight of some buffaloes, while numerous "big-horns" were seen bounding amid the crags on either side.

Another day was spent before we were fairly in the valley, but my father and Uncle Denis agreed that we were well repaid for the toil we had gone through. They selected a spot for our habitation on the side of a hill, sloping gradually up from the stream, where we might be out of the reach of its swelling waters and yet make use of it for irrigating the land. We at once pitched my mother's tent, and set to work to cut down timber for a log hut for ourselves. As soon as this was done, I and two of the men were despatched by my father to fetch more of our stores, or to bring on the waggons, should we find a more practicable road than the one by which we had come. I felt duly proud of the important charge committed to me, and set off in high spirits.

By keeping more to the left than we had done, I was fortunate enough to discover a road over which I felt sure that the waggons could make their way, and once more, after three

days' journey, we entered the valley which had at first so enchanted me. It now wore a very different aspect to my eyes. The sky was cloudy, and we had come from so far superior a region that I was very thankful we had not selected it for our location. As we passed through the gorge, the light of the sun being shut out from us, my spirits sank, and I began to dread lest our camp might have been attacked, and we should find it in the same condition as that from which we had rescued Lily. I forgot how confident my father was that it would be safe, and that I ought not to be doubtful of his judgment.

Emerging at last from the pass, I caught sight of the white tilts of the waggons, arranged in perfect order. A cheer rose as we approached, and Martin hurried out to greet us, and to report "all well."

The journey across the mountain with the heavy waggons, was a far more difficult undertaking than with the carts, but by caution, perseverance, and judgment, we succeeded in getting through without any accident, and I was rewarded on my arrival by the approbation of my father.

For some time after this, we were busily engaged in putting up a house and outbuildings, with cottages for the men, and in fencing in land for a garden, and fields, so that during that period we met with no adventures worth narrating.

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## Chapter Eleven.

**Our new home—Fortifications—Snake-fencing—Education of my sister and Lily—Dio means to catch a bear—Depredations on our poultry-yard—Capture of Dame Bruin—A contribution to Uncle Denis's menagerie—Training the cubs—Hunting expeditions—A colony of beavers—How the dams are built—Dio's magic sticks—We turn trappers—Fight with a grizzly—Visit of a wolverine to our hut—Traps set—Our success—Left in charge—An Indian takes me by surprise—Kluko's warning to the pale-faces—Commence our return journey.**

The grand point had to be settled, the name we should give to our new home in the wilderness. Kathleen and Lily begged that it might be called "Smiling Valley Farm," and all voices were unanimous in deciding as they wished. A dwelling-house was

constructed of rough logs, like an ordinary log hut but larger, the trunks being placed above each other horizontally, with a groove in the lower to receive the upper one and the ends fitting into each other, while the interstices were plastered with clay and the interior lined with shingles or planks split by wedges and afterwards shaped and planed down smooth. A broad veranda ran round it, which afforded shade during the summer, and prevented the snow from beating into the windows in winter. Surrounding it was a strong palisade which it was considered necessary to put up, in case we should be attacked by the Indians, who, although at present we understood were peaceably disposed, might at any time take it into their heads to attempt our destruction. Still my father hoped, by treating the tribes in the neighbourhood fairly and kindly, to win their friendship. Outside the palisade we dug a deep ditch which served both to drain the house and strengthen the fortifications. Over it was a drawbridge, which was raised by tackles and so constructed as greatly to strengthen the gate. We calculated, should it ever become necessary, that we should be able to maintain a lengthened siege in our stronghold, though my father, old soldier as he was, said he earnestly hoped that we should never be compelled to resort to our means of defence. "It is wise however to be prepared, and the redskins, seeing that we are ready for them, will not, I trust, venture to molest us," he added.

Up to the present time, indeed, no Indians had come near the farm, and the scattered families we occasionally met in our more distant hunting expeditions seemed unaware of its existence. The huts of the men, also surrounded by stockades, were so placed on either side of the dwelling-house that they could sweep the front by a cross-fire should an enemy ever attempt to escalate our walls.

As we brought the ground under cultivation, we surrounded the garden and fields with snake fences, which are made in a rough fashion, the rails being placed one upon another in a zigzag form, and secured at the angles by stakes driven into the ground. They were formed by splitting trees into four or five portions, according to their girth, an operation carried on by means of wedges driven in with sledge-hammers.

When once the rails were split, the fence was very quickly put up. As in a short time creepers grew over them, they had a very picturesque appearance.

When we were fairly settled, Mr Tidey resumed his duties as our Tutor.

A large portion of our time, however, was still passed in outdoor occupations. We had indeed to make frequent hunting excursions to supply ourselves with meat until our stock of cattle, pigs, and poultry, had increased sufficiently to allow us to kill any of them for food.

The winter, which rapidly came on, though severe, was shorter than in more northern latitudes, but by that time our house was in a sufficiently forward condition to resist the cold, and our stoves were kept well supplied with logs. I must pass over the events of that period.

Our evenings, and a portion of every day, when the Dominie was at home, were spent in receiving instruction from him; my sister and Lily being also his pupils. He at all events, stored their minds with useful knowledge, although unable to instruct them in those feminine accomplishments which young ladies in eastern cities consider of so much importance. A piano they had never seen, but they knew what it was like from pictures. They, however, had guitars, which Uncle Denis purchased from some Mexicans, and they became very fair musicians, being able to accompany their voices on the instruments with taste and skill. My father taught them drawing, albeit their lessons were few and far between; but they showed an aptitude for the art, and made good use of their pencils. They were, notwithstanding this, accomplished in all household matters, while they diligently plied their needles and made puddings and cakes of unsurpassed excellence.

I have mentioned this merely to show that young ladies in the wilderness may, if they have the will, obtain as fair an amount of useful knowledge and elegant accomplishments as those who are generally supposed to be their sole possessors. I am, however, describing them as they were in subsequent years. At present they were but young girls, though improving daily in mind and person.

Uncle Denis had long wished to carry out his cherished plan of forming a menagerie by taming the wild animals of the country, which he averred he could do by proper treatment.

The difficulty, however, was to take them alive when young enough to benefit by his proposed training.

"I should like to have a fine young grizzly, though I suspect he would prove rather an obstinate pupil," remarked Uncle Denis in Dio's hearing.

Some time after this Dio came to me and said, "Me tinkee me get b'ar 'fore long for Massa Denis an' gib him pleasant surprise."

On inquiring how he expected to do this, he told me that he had discovered a nest of honey-bees in a wood a short distance from the house, and that twice on returning home late in the evening he had seen a shaggy beast, which he was sure was a bear, going in that direction, but that having no bullets in his pouch at the time, he did not wish to become better acquainted with it. After each occasion he had found that the nest had been robbed of a portion of its contents, and that from its position the plunderer had been unable to carry off the remainder. He was sure that the bear was the thief, and he had formed a plan for catching it; he would then, he said, bring Uncle Denis to the spot, and exhibit his captive. I asked him how he intended to proceed.

"Come an' see, Massa Mike. I will show you," he replied.

We accordingly went together into the wood, when he showed me a large tree, the lower part of the trunk being hollow from age. At the higher part of the cavity, which had an opening outside, was the bees' nest; up this it was very evident that the bear had put his paw, but, unable to reach higher, had to content himself with the lower portion of the comb, which the industrious inhabitants had set to work immediately afterwards to restore.

"But, Dio," I observed, "though the bear may possibly go into the hollow to obtain more honey, how are you to make him stay there. As soon as he hears your footstep he will be off, unless he is in fighting humour, in which case we shall be compelled to shoot him to prevent him injuring us."

"Wait 'bit, massa, you see some day," answered Dio.

Whether the bear was fond of honey, we had soon evidence that he or some other animal was of our pigs and poultry. One night a tremendous cackling was heard in the poultry-yard. The next morning it was discovered that a fat turkey, captured by Uncle Denis, and a couple of ducks, were carried off, and during the next night we were aroused by several piercing squeaks, and afterwards found that one of our porkers had disappeared.

We watched for several following nights, but if Master Bruin had been the depredator, he was too wary to repeat his visits. As he would not come to us to be shot, we searched for him in all

directions among the neighbouring rocks, where, in some hitherto undiscovered cave, it was thought probable he had his abode. No traces of him, however, could we discover. Dio during this time was not idle. I inquired whether the bear had again robbed the bees.

"No, he not come back yet, but he soon come, an' den you see," he answered, looking very mysterious.

At length, one evening, I met him running towards the house in a state of great excitement.

"Wha'r Massa Denis?" he asked; "me tinkee me got b'ar for him now. Wha'r is he?"

For a wonder, he was in the house, as was Dan; so I called them both.

"We must get some cords to bind our prisoner, or otherwise he may not be quite ready to accompany us," said my uncle.

Having procured some pieces of strong rope, we set off. We overtook Dio, and asked him how he knew that the bear had got into the hollow trunk. He then described his plan of proceeding. He had filled the lower part of the cavity with dry leaves, branches, and twigs, and had laid a train so that he could fire it in an instant. He had also blocked up a portion of the entrance, and had placed some stout sticks, sharply pointed, directed inwards, so that although the bear could squeeze through one way, he would find it a difficult task to back out again.

As we approached the tree described by Dio, he advised us to get our rifles ready, and to have our lashings prepared to bind Bruin's legs when he tried to come out, as he probably would, tail first. Still the animal did not make his appearance.

"Perhaps he is afraid of descending for fear of burning himself, as you have lighted a fire at the bottom of the hollow, and he would have to go through it," observed Uncle Denis.

Dio asserted that it was because the dogs kept up a barking, and he advised that we should retire to a short distance, while he remained near to listen when the bear was descending. We kept the dogs back and held our guns in readiness, should Bruin come forth, indignant at having his hide singed, and make a rush at us.



We waited several minutes, but with the exception of some low growls, which grew fainter and fainter, no sounds reached our ears. Dio every now and then popped his woolly pate out from behind the tree where he was hiding himself, showing his white teeth, evidently wondering what was going to happen. Presently a loud crashing noise was heard, and the sticks which Dio had placed at the entrance of the hollow giving way, out fell a huge bear headlong to the ground. Dio rushed forward.

"Come here, Massa Denis; come here, make fast de bear!" he shouted. Then he looked at the animal as Uncle Denis advanced, adding, "Me tink him dead."

The two dogs also, which now ran forward, seemed to be very much of the same opinion, for without hesitation they ran up and placed their paws on the monster, sniffing fearlessly round him. The smoke from Dio's fire had effectually suffocated him.

"I am afraid that he will not become an inhabitant of my menagerie," said Uncle Denis, laughing, "and I doubt, if we had caught him alive, that he would have proved amenable to my instruction."

Lest the bear should recover at an inconvenient moment, we put a shot through his head, and then proceeded to cut him up, that we might carry home the flesh, which was likely to prove very acceptable at the farm.

It was one of the largest of the she-bears of the brown species I ever met with, and, though not so fierce as the grizzly, would have proved a formidable antagonist had it been encountered when hard pressed by hunger.

The smoke which had killed the bear had also suffocated the bees, and Dan and I, climbing up, secured the remainder of the comb which Bruin had left.

"We shall probably find Dame Bruin's cubs somewhere or other, if we follow up her trail," observed Uncle Denis, as we were employed in cutting up the bear. "Though she would have proved a difficult subject to tame, we may have more hope of succeeding with them." As soon as the operation was performed, and we had hung up the meat to the bough of a tree—a necessary precaution in that region—we set off to look for the cubs. The animal, not having the instinct of the red man, had left a clearly marked trail as she made her way through the forest. Guided by the marks of the grass trampled down, boughs bent aside, and twigs broken off, we had no difficulty in

following it up, though it continued for a far greater distance than we had expected. It led us towards a rocky spur of the mountain, mostly covered with trees and thick brushwood, so that we could see but a short distance ahead.

"Take care, massa, p'r'aps he b'ar dare lookin' after de pickaninnies, so, if he come out, better be ready to shoot him," observed Dio.

"We'll soon make him show himself," answered Uncle Denis, and he called to our dogs, who had obediently followed at our heels, to range ahead. Off they started, delighted with the duty entrusted to them. After ranging backwards and forwards, occasionally showing themselves amid the brushwood, their loud barks and yelps convinced us that they had found either the young bears or some other animal. We made our way towards the spot from whence the sounds proceeded, with our guns ready should we discover any formidable antagonist. As we got up we saw the shaggy tails of our dogs wagging vehemently outside a cavern, within which it did not seem possible that any large animal could be hidden. Now Boxer would rush further in, now Toby, while a whimpering sound, mingled with an occasional infantine growl, showed us that the cave was alone occupied by the cubs of which we were in search. Fearing that the animals would be injured, we called off the dogs, when their bloody mouths and the brown hair sticking to their jaws, proved that they had had a battle with the occupants of the cave. The difficulty was now to get the creatures out without further injuring them. Though I might easily have crawled in, yet it would be at the risk of being bitten by the young bears, who would, should I do so, naturally mistake me for one of the dogs about to renew the fight.

"Stay, massa," said Dio at length; "I do it!" Without delay he cut down a young sapling, which he quickly stripped of its branches. He had still tied round his waist a piece of the rope we had brought to secure the bear. With this we formed a noose at the end of the pole. "Now I get him out," he observed creeping into the mouth of the cavern and pushing the pole before him. After moving it about for a few seconds, he shouted—

"Pull 'way, massa, got one of dem!" and, he quickly backing out, we hauled away on the rope. The resistance we found told us of Dio's success, and presently we hauled out a good-sized cub, but it was bleeding from its mouth and shoulders, an evidence of the severe way in which the dogs had worried it. Though it struggled and tried to bite, it was so much hurt, that

Uncle Denis, believing that it would not live, at once put it out of its misery.

"Dere is 'nodder inside," observed Dio, listening at the mouth of the cave; "git him next."

Once more he shoved in the pole. Some time elapsed before he again shouted out to us to haul away, when we pulled forth by the front paws another cub, which, although it had some blood-stains about it, seemed to be unharmed. The smaller one did not struggle so violently as his companion had done.

"Just the creature I wanted," exclaimed Uncle Denis, delighted. "I must muzzle Master Bruin at present, to prevent him from biting our favourites, but he'll soon become as gentle as a lamb."

The little bear made violent efforts to retaliate, but a piece of rope put round his nose, prevented him from opening his mouth, while we fastened his fore-legs together; we then, taking two sticks, placed them under his body and Uncle Denis and I carried him along, while Dio brought the little dead bear on his back. The bear's flesh we carried home was very acceptable, but our hunting expeditions had of late not been so successful as before, many of the animals having migrated southwards to escape the approaching winter.

At first Master Bruin was very snappish, but as he grew hungry, he was glad to take a sup of goat's milk, which Uncle Denis gave him from a bottle, and in a short time he gratefully received food from the hands of anyone of us. He showed from the first great fondness for honey, to which his mamma had probably accustomed him, or he may have inherited the taste from her. Uncle Denis taking him in hand, taught him all sorts of tricks, and before long he became a most tractable and well-behaved bear.

A few days after we had captured "Bruno," Dan and I, with Uncle Denis, accompanied by Dio, set off on a hunting expedition down the valley, towards a broad river, which after feeding a large lake found its way into the Missouri. It was itself fed by other streams which came down from the mountain ranges, but varied greatly, according to the season of the year. Sometimes they were mere rivulets; at others, they were swelled by the melting snows. In case of becoming separated, we always fixed on some well-marked spot, where we could assemble at an hour agreed on, or at the end of the day's sport, either to camp or return home. Dan and I always kept together.

On this occasion we had lost sight of Uncle Denis and Dio, though we heard their shots in the distance.

We had found no deer, though we had killed some wild fowl on the banks of the stream, when we heard, as we supposed, the report of our uncle's gun, some way up it. We set off to try and rejoin him; twice again we heard a shot in the same direction, but apparently further off. Still we persevered, making our way as well as we could through the thick wood.

Near the stream, willow, lime, and other water-loving trees grew to a large size, with a fringe of thick reeds through which it was difficult to penetrate.

After going some distance, we struck a trail, which we guessed was our uncle's, certainly not that of an Indian, who would have been careful where he trod, so as not to have crushed the grass, or broken off leaves and twigs in his way. The trail, as we advanced, became more and more clear, and we expected every moment to catch sight of our uncle. Though we had not heard a shot for some time, we suddenly came upon him, when he put up his hand as a signal to us not to speak, and crept forward through the reeds. We followed him, until he stopped behind a tree, and leaning forward looked up the stream, which flowed over a rocky bed close to us, while a short distance off a dam, which seemed to have been constructed by human hands—so considerable was its extent—was thrown across from side to side, the water beyond it being perfectly smooth. Out of it rose a number of round-topped artificial structures, some two feet or more above the surface, while a large community of animals, which we knew at once were beavers, were busily moving about, some employed in either repairing or increasing their dam, others in dragging pieces of willow across their lake, either to form new abodes, to mend any fractures in the old ones, or to serve as food, the fresh bark being their chief article of diet. Some again were on shore gnawing away at young trees with their sharp teeth, and two fell directly over the stream while we were watching them. Instantly the whole community hurried forward to assist in cutting off the branches and reducing the log to a more manageable size.

Unwilling to disturb them, we remained perfectly silent.

Of course we might have shot several; but had we done so, it would have been difficult afterwards to obtain them, and possibly the community might have moved off to some other locality. Having, therefore, satisfied our curiosity, we retired,

and made our way back to the spot where we intended to camp, and where we hoped Dio would join us.

It is seldom that beavers can be seen at work in the day-time, as they usually perform their various tasks during the hours of darkness. I may as well here describe the beaver. It is about three and a half feet long, including the tail, which is flat, covered with scales, and shaped like a paddle, being about a foot in length. Its back is covered with long thin hair of a light chestnut colour, beneath which lies a fine wool of soft greyish brown. The head is rather round than pointed, the jaws of extraordinary strength, its teeth being also of great power and extreme sharpness, to enable it to gnaw through wood as well as to bite off the bark from the trees on which it chiefly lives. The object of the animals in building the wonderful dams they often construct, is that they may form ponds in which a sufficient depth of water can be maintained at all seasons of the year. Instinct rather than reason prompts them to do this; still, on examining the dams, it is difficult to suppose that they have been formed by animals. They are composed of young trees, or of branches cut into lengths, each of about three feet, and laid horizontally, one upon the other. While one party brings the log, another follows with mud and stones, which they place upon it to keep it from rising. At the bottom they are actually twelve feet thick, though as they rise towards the top they diminish to the width of two feet. When it is understood that some of these dams are between two and three hundred yards long, it may be supposed what an enormous number of small logs are required to make one.

What appears still more extraordinary is that when the stream runs slowly, the dam is built directly across it, but should the current be strong it is curved, with the convex side pointing up the stream, so that it should the better withstand the force of the water. I frequently found these dams with small trees growing out of them, showing that they must have existed a number of years. In the lake thus formed by the dam the beavers build their houses, or lodges, as they are called by trappers. They are constructed in the same way as the dams, with small logs kept together by clay and lined with moss, the roof being plastered thickly with mud, which in time becomes so perfectly hard, that it is difficult to break through it. It is a task which the cunning wolverine—who is fond of beaver meat—can never accomplish, and he prefers to pounce down on any of the animals which incautiously venture forth, when he is in the neighbourhood.

These "lodges" outside measure as much as seven or eight feet in height, and they are often from sixteen to twenty in circumference, but the walls are so thick that the interior does not exceed three feet in height and from six to eight in circumference. The entrance, which is under water, is at such a depth that they cannot be frozen in.

It is a common idea among trappers, that the beaver uses his tail for a trowel to flatten down the mud, but this is denied by more observing naturalists, who assert that the tail is merely employed for swimming, although when he is at work with his paws, he may flap it about, but not for any other object.

One of the most extraordinary characteristics of the beaver is, that it secretes from certain glands a peculiar odoriferous substance called "castoreum," or "bark-stone" by the trappers. So strangely are the beavers attracted by this substance, that sniffing it up with their nostrils, they will hurry towards it to enjoy the scent. It is consequently the bait used by trappers. The trap is placed five or six inches below the water, and just above it is stuck a stick dipped in bark-stone. The unwary beaver eagerly swims up to it and is caught by the treacherous trap below. Old beavers are, however, generally too cunning; and it is said that on discovering a trap they will carry mud and stones, and drop them over it until it is completely buried. Such was the account which Uncle Denis gave us as we sat round our camp-fire that evening. Dio had listened attentively; he merely observed—

"Dis niggas know all 'bout it."

The next morning he invited us to accompany him to the beaver pond, saying, "You shall see what you shall see." Uncle Denis's curiosity had been excited by Dio's mysterious remark, and he accompanied us. Dio produced a bundle of small twigs, which he carried under his arm as we went along. Approaching the pond he begged that we would remain concealed while he went forward. After a little time he summoned us and told us to sit down on the bank of the stream. I had always heard that beavers were the most timid of creatures, and that they would disappear on the approach of human beings, but to our surprise, immediately after Dio had begun to throw in some of his magic twigs, a shoal of beavers popped up from their lodges and rapidly approached, utterly regardless of our presence. So close did they come without perceiving us, that we might have knocked several on the head, but it would probably have been the signal for the disappearance of the whole of them. They

appeared to be animated with but one thought, that of carrying off the twigs dipped in their beloved "bark-stone."

A few old fellows swam off to a distance and began to devour the twigs, which were evidently much to their taste. Beaver-skins were at that time of great value.

"We have here a mine of wealth, if we work it properly," observed Uncle Denis; "probably no trappers have as yet discovered this beaver-dam, and we must take care not to let anyone else know of it until we have captured the inhabitants. I brought a dozen iron traps among my stores, though I have as yet been too busy to use them. We will go home to-morrow morning, look them out, and return with them at once. Remember that we must keep our discovery a secret. We shall I hope give a pleasant surprise to your father."

The plan proposed by Uncle Denis was adopted. Laden with the traps and such stores as we required for a week's residence in the wilderness, we started, accompanied by Mr Tidey. On reaching the spot we built a substantial hut, in which we could store our provisions, and by closing the entrance, we expected to be able to preserve our beaver skins from the attacks of wolverines during our absence from camp. We lost no time in setting the traps under the water in the runs made by the beavers when passing backwards and forwards to the woods from whence they obtained the bark on which they fed. We observed that they had cut down numbers of young trees, for a considerable distance along the banks of the stream above their town. This, Uncle Denis surmised they had done that they might, after they had divided them into proper lengths, allow them to float down to the spot where they were required. By hiding ourselves during a moonlight night we had an opportunity of seeing them engaged in their labours. It was truly wonderful to observe the rapid way in which the industrious creatures nibbled through a tree and reduced it to the dimensions they required.

On examining our traps for the first time, we found each had caught a beaver, some by the legs, others by their noses. The latter were drowned, as even a beaver cannot remain beyond a certain time under water, but I must own I felt compunction when I witnessed the struggles of the other poor creatures to free themselves, though they were put out of their pain as soon as possible by a blow on the head. Resetting the traps, we returned to camp to take off the skins and dress them. We dined on the meat, which we agreed resembled flabby pork. Mr Tidey, however, undertook to provide better fare the next day. I

accompanied him while the rest of the party went back to look after the traps. We had killed a deer, and had loaded ourselves with as much venison as we could carry, intending to return for the remainder, when Mr Tidey fired at a turkey, for the sake of having a variety for our dinner. At that instant a huge grizzly she-bear rose up from behind a thicket, and before he could reload, charged right at him. I was too far off to fire with any certainty of hitting the animal. Fortunately, close to Mr Tidey was a large clump of rose bushes, behind which he immediately sprang, when the bear, missing him, rose up on her hind-legs, and, looking about, came towards me. I knelt to receive her, knowing that, were I to run, I should be overtaken and destroyed. She was within thirty yards when Mr Tidey, having reloaded, fired and hit her on the back. She stopped and began to turn round and round, snapping at her side and tearing at the wound with her teeth and claws. Expecting to gain an easy victory I advanced a few paces and fired, but so rapid were her movements, that my bullet missed.

"Quick, quick! reload, Mike!" cried Mr Tidey, who saw what had happened.

The warning did not come too soon, for at that instant the bear rose again on her hind-legs, with a furious growl, preparatory to springing on me. Mr Tidey was still too far off to fire with any certainty of mortally wounding the bear, and, should his bullet miss her, it might hit me. My life depended, therefore, on my next shot; should I miss, one blow from her tremendous paw would bring me to the ground, and the next instant I should be torn to pieces. I loaded as rapidly as I could, while I kept my eye on my antagonist. Scarcely had I time to ram down the ball when she was close up to me. I dared not look to ascertain what help Mr Tidey was likely to afford me. As the bear approached I lifted up my rifle to my shoulder and fired. The bear gave a tremendous growl, but still advanced. With a desperate bound I sprang on one side, when over she rolled, and lay struggling on the ground. She might be up again, however, at any moment, so I ran off to a distance to reload, catching sight, as I did so, of Mr Tidey, who, coming up, fired at the bear's head, and, greatly to my relief, her struggles ceased. Having thrown some sticks and stones at the creature to ascertain that it was really dead, we approached, and found that she measured no less than seven and a half feet in length, with claws four and a half inches long. I shuddered as I thought of the dreadful wounds she might have inflicted with them. We skinned her, and as we were already heavily loaded, we hung up the hide and part of the flesh to the branches of a



neighbouring tree, carrying only a little of the meat for our supper. We had got close to our camp, when Mr Tidey exclaimed—

“Holloa! our hut has been broken into; some rascally wolverine has paid us a visit.”

I ran forward, and just as I got up to the hut, out darted the thief, almost knocking me over; before I could recover myself it had made its way round to the back of the hut. I sprang to one side, hoping to get a shot at him, but he had disappeared. We hurried in, when we found our beaver-skins scattered about, most of them being so gnawed as to be utterly valueless.

“This will be an annoyance to your uncle; but we may congratulate ourselves on having secured a fine bear and deer-skin, which will make some amends for our loss,” he observed.

We had just made up our fire, and stuck the meat on spits to roast before it, when Uncle Denis and his companion arrived, with a dozen more beaver-skins.

As soon as the meat was cooked, we sat down and made a hearty meal, during which we told Uncle Denis of our loss.

“We must take care that the cunning rogue does not play us such a trick again,” he observed; “should it find out your venison and hear’s meat, it will leave us but a small share by the morning.”

“Then we shall be wise to bring both into the camp to-night,” said the Dominie; “if anyone will accompany me, I will go and get them.”

Dan and I at once offered to go, and Dio begged that he might accompany us. We were just in time to catch sight of a wolverine climbing up the tree to which we had secured the bear-skin. Mr Tidey fired, but the animal leaped off a bough from a considerable height, and scampered away, as far as we could see, unwounded.

While Dio and Dan were packing up the meat Mr Tidey and I hastened on to where we had left the venison.

On this occasion the wolverine had been too quick for us. He must have gone direct to the spot, for we saw him busily engaged in devouring our meat. On hearing us approach he decamped, carrying off a joint in his jaws, so that scarcely one

load remained. We secured this, and then rejoined the black and my brother; and the former carrying the bear-skin in addition to a huge ham, we returned to the camp. Uncle Denis had been busily employed in forming a trap in which he hoped to catch the depredator. He finished it off by the light of the fire. It consisted of two heavy beams with holes in them, and so placed that the upper would fall down on the bait being touched, and kill the animal. That the wolverine, should he fail to be caught by the trap, might not revenge himself by destroying our skins or carrying off our meat, we constructed a strong framework in the top of our hut, in which we placed everything of value, and, to make it additionally secure, we stuck in some thick stakes round the entrance, intertwining them with branches.

"The brute will be clever enough if he breaks through that," observed Uncle Denis, as he surveyed our work the following morning before we set out.

We were as successful as on the previous day, and in the evening we returned heavily laden with our spoils.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Uncle Denis, as he ran forward on seeing the body of an animal sticking out of his well-contrived trap; caught by the head and claws as the robber had seized on the bait.

It was the wolverine which had at length been outwitted: though nearly strangled, it required several heavy blows before it was killed outright. The creature was about the size of a small wolf, of a brownish-black colour, the paws being perfectly black, contrasting with the extreme whiteness of the claws, which were of great size, resembling those of a bear; indeed the animal was not unlike a young bear. We dragged it away from our camp and flayed it, that we might preserve the skin to carry home. Our success had been greater than we expected, and as we could not carry all our skins, Mr Tidey and Dan set off to the farm, to bring back a couple of horses to convey them home. Uncle Denis considering that it would be unwise to leave so much property without protection, asked me to remain in camp, while he and Dio continued trapping. This of course I willingly undertook to do, keeping my gun in readiness to shoot any animal which might approach. It was about noon, and as I was getting hungry I had placed a piece of venison to roast before the fire, and had sat down to watch it, when I was startled by seeing standing at no great distance from me an Indian who had approached so silently that I had not been aware of his presence. I rose to my feet, holding my rifle ready, should he

come as a foe. But his bow was at his back and his arrows in the quiver. He spread out his hands to show that he held no weapons in them, and then, coming forward, sat down opposite to me. I imitated his example, keeping my eye fixed on him, for at any moment he might draw his tomahawk or scalping-knife from his belt. I pointed to the meat, and made signs that he should be welcome to some of it as soon as it was sufficiently cooked. He nodded in return, but still did not speak, and I concluded that his ignorance of English prevented him from addressing me. As soon as the venison was sufficiently cooked, I handed him the larger portion with some salt and a piece of corn bread which I had baked in the morning. He ate the food with evident satisfaction.

"Good, good!" he said.

They were the first words he had spoken, and he then made signs that he should like something to drink. We had no spirits; my father had always refused to give the Indians "fire-water," I therefore brewed some tea, and offered him a tin mug with plenty of sugar in it. He was evidently disappointed at the taste, but drank it off and then held out his cup for more. When he appeared to be satisfied, I asked him if he spoke the language of the "pale-faces."

He nodded.

"Then perhaps you will say why you come to pay me a visit?"

"I was hungry, and I knew you had meat to give," he answered. "I have lived long with the 'pale-faces' when I was a boy, and know that some are good and kind, and others bad and cruel. I have heard of the white chief up at the farm, and that he is just and generous to all the red-men who go there. It is right, therefore, that he should be preserved from harm. A short time back it came to my knowledge that the Blackfeet, who are jealous of any of the pale-faces coming into their country, have formed a plan to destroy the farm, and to kill all the inhabitants. I was on my way to give them warning, when I discovered traces of white men hunting in this neighbourhood. Following up a recent trail, I was led to your camp. I guessed you belonged to the farm, and would save me from the necessity of going there. I must charge you not to tell any of the red-men you may meet with from whom you obtained the information. I have warned you, be wise. The attack may be immediate, or it may not be made for some moons to come, but one thing is certain, that when the Blackfeet think you are off

the watch, they will try to surprise you, and having resolved on a deed they seldom change their minds."

I, of course, thanked the Indian for his warning, assuring him that my father was too wise a man not to profit by it, and that he would be glad to reward him for the important service he had rendered us.

"Kluko requires no reward. Gratitude prompts him to try and save the lives of his pale-faced friends," answered the Indian.

I, of course, do not give the exact expressions he used; indeed I had some difficulty in understanding his language. I begged him to remain until the return of my uncle and his companion. This, after some pressing, he consented to do, and to show his confidence in me, having rolled his blanket around him, he lay down before the fire, and was soon fast asleep.

Knowing that he would be very glad of more food on awaking, I spitted a double supply of venison and bear's flesh. Sooner than I had expected, Uncle Denis and Dan made their appearance.

As they approached the camp Kluko started to his feet, even in his sleep hearing their footsteps. They were much astonished on seeing him, but still more so on learning the object of his visit.

My uncle tried to recollect whether he had ever seen Kluko before, but the Indian asserted that they had never met. He remained with us until the following morning; then, charging us earnestly not to forget his warning, took his departure.

Early in the day the Dominie and two of the men arrived with the horses, which we at once loaded and set off as fast as possible on our return home.

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## Chapter Twelve.

**Our homestead—My sister and Lily lost—Anxiety of the black nurse—We set off to try and find them—Following up the trail—Tracks found—Dio pushes ahead—On the shores of the lake—Appearance of a canoe—We determine to take the occupants prisoners—The capture—Rose acting as guard—The white man secured—I recognise an old acquaintance—The way we treated him—Searching along the lake shore, we**

**come upon an encampment—Overhear the conversation—Our presence discovered—Effects of the war-whoop—Flight of the party with Dio—The midnight pursuit—An unlooked-for reinforcement—Release of the black—Our prisoners—Lynch law—A villainous plot revealed—We arrive at Smiling Valley farm.**

We were approaching the farm with our packages of skins and meats; Dio and I had hurried on ahead, as I was anxious to inform my father of the intelligence we had received from the Indian. The house, perched on the side of a hill, was already in sight, and very picturesque it looked, with the stream flowing below it, and backed by ranges of mountains towering one beyond the other, the more distant capped by eternal snows. Evening was approaching, but the sun still tinged the eastern slopes and the summits of the tall trees with a ruddy glow, when we caught sight of a person running towards us.

"Why! dat is Rose?" exclaimed Dio; "what she want?"

As she got near us I saw that her countenance exhibited unusual alarm and anxiety.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

Panting from her exertions and the long run she had had, she was at first unable to reply.

"De young ladies! de young ladies! you seen dem? Dey went out long dis path, and have not yet come back. Oh, dear! oh, dear! can anything have happened to dem?"

On hearing this I became alarmed, for as we had not met the girls, it was very certain that they had taken some other path. Rose further said that they had been absent for some hours, though they had promised to return early in the afternoon. She confessed that she had not told my mother or Biddy, and she was the only person in the house who knew of their having intended to go farther than usual.

Grizzlies, wolves, panthers, and prowling Indians instantly flashed across my mind; still I hoped that even before this they might have returned home by some other way.

Dio, who was evidently far more alarmed than I felt, suddenly, without a moment's warning of his intention, darted away

through some thick brushwood to the eastward, exclaiming, "Me find 'em! me find 'em!"

As he disappeared in the wood, I fancied I saw him stoop and wave a handkerchief, but the light was uncertain, and I thought I must have been mistaken. My first impulse was to follow Dio, but on looking back, I saw Mr Tidey coming along the path in the distance, and I reflected that our object was far more likely to be attained by getting him to accompany me, as, should we discover the direction taken by Kathleen and Lily, we might follow up their trail together, and be more likely to rescue them, if they had, as was possible, been captured by Indians. Mr Tidey was naturally very much alarmed at the tidings I gave him.

"We will set off at once and send Rose back to let our friends know the way we have gone," he observed, as we hurried towards the spot where the black woman was standing. On nearing the place, however, we found that she had gone after Dio, and we accordingly ran on in the same direction. It was some time before we overtook her, and we then in vain endeavoured to persuade her to go back.

"No!" she exclaimed. It was her fault, as she should have accompanied them, and return home without them she would not.

As valuable time would be lost in persuading her to do what we wished, we allowed her to accompany us. We soon had to regret this, as we were frequently compelled to assist her, but we had now gone so far that it would have been cruel to leave her behind. We shouted as we went on, to Dio, but his voice did not reply. That we were on his trail was certain, for we could see the twigs, which he or some one else had broken off, but whether the girls had gone in the same direction, we were doubtful. At length we came to a spot where we discovered the marks of several feet. Mr Tidey stopped, and, stooping down, examined them minutely.

"The marks are those of moccasins!" he exclaimed. "Indians must have been here, and if so, it is too probable that the dear girls may have fallen into their hands. Even the worst savages cannot intend to harm them, but may hope to obtain a ransom, or perhaps when we set off to try and recover them, they may expect to cut us off in detail, or to attack the farm when most of the defenders are away, with a better chance of success. We must be cautious, therefore, as we proceed, but still I hope we can defeat their object."

"Though Indians may have been here, we have no proof that they have taken Kathleen and Lily prisoners," I observed.

We had not gone far, perhaps ten paces, after I made this remark, when Rose, darting towards a bush, picked up from beneath it a small piece of ribbon, which she at once pronounced to be part of the tie of Lily's large straw hat. This settled the question, though how she managed to tear off the string so as to leave it as an indication of the direction they had taken, it was difficult to say. Was it done on purpose, or had it been torn off in a struggle she might have made to escape. One thing was certain. We must continue the pursuit. We hoped every instant to overtake the black, but we were now afraid of shouting, lest the Indians should hear us, and be warned of our approach. On and on we went. The sun had set, and darkness shrouded the lower part of the forest. In a few minutes the moon, still almost at the full, rose and enabled us to see our way as well as in daylight, accustomed as we were to be out at night; at the same time it was difficult to distinguish the trail which had hitherto guided us. We had been going for some time in the direction of the lake, the western edge of which extended along the base of the mountains. It was fed by streams descending from them. Although not a broad lake, it reached a long way to the southward, and I began to fear that should Indians have carried off the girls, they might have embarked on the lake, and if so, our chances of overtaking them were small indeed. I now regretted that I had not waited to communicate with Uncle Denis before we had started. He would probably have gone on to the farm, and, having obtained horses, set off with a strong party, which by proceeding along the eastern side of the lake, might have headed the people, whoever they were, who had committed the outrage. We were satisfied, however, that there were not many of them. They would, however, should we come up with them, have a great advantage over us, for we could not venture to fire at them for fear of wounding their captives, whereas they might blaze away at us with impunity. I said something of this in effect to the Dominie.

"If they are Indians, they are not likely to have fire-arms," he remarked, "and I cannot fancy that white men would have any object in carrying off the dear girls."

Fast as we were going, Dio must have gone faster, for still we saw nothing of him. Whenever we slackened our pace, Rose exclaimed—

"Go on, Massa Tidey, go on Massa Mike, no stop for me, I keep up, me got wind now!"

Her eagerness enabled her indeed to exert herself in a way she could not otherwise have done. At length we caught sight of the water between the trees, and in a few minutes we were standing on the shore of the lake. The moon shed her bright light on the calm surface of the beautiful sheet of water, enabling us to see a great distance along it. At one side rose the mountains, on the other the banks were fringed with trees of magnificent growth, except here and there, where grassy glades came down to the edge of the water, or points jutted out, forming sheltered bays and nooks, which might conceal those of whom we were in search. We stood for some minutes straining our eyes, in the expectation of seeing a canoe gliding rapidly away from us, but not a speck could we distinguish on the unruffled bosom of the lake. We searched about to try and discover any signs of a canoe having touched the shore, but we could find nothing to indicate that one had been there. That we had not lost the trail, however, we felt nearly certain. We had now to decide what probable direction the fugitives had taken; it was not likely that they would have gone towards the mountains, and indeed, on further search, we found that the wood in that direction was almost impracticable. Not a single clear track or opening through it could we discover, while to the left, people could easily have made their way either close to the shore, or a short distance from it.

We accordingly advanced in that direction, moving with the greatest possible caution, so that we might have a chance of discovering the marauders before they would be aware of our approach. The Dominie went first, I followed, and Rose brought up the rear, for nothing would induce her to return.

"If you fight, I fight too, so dat we get back de young ladies!" she exclaimed in a determined tone, and possessing herself of a thick stick which lay on the shore of the lake, she trudged on after us.

We trod as carefully as we could, keeping ourselves as much as possible concealed by the trunks of the trees and brushwood. Sometimes we had to get down close to the lake when we could discover no other way through the wood. The Dominie was trying to find a path between the trees when I heard Rose exclaim—

"Hist! Massa Mike, dare come canoe ober de water!"

I called to Mr Tidey, who stopped, and, sheltering ourselves under the shadow of the trees, we looked in the direction Rose pointed. There, sure enough, was a canoe skimming lightly over



the moonlit waters. She appeared to be of large size, though I could only see two paddles going. We watched eagerly to know to what part of the bank she was directing her course. Twice it was altered, as if the people in the canoe were uncertain where to land. At length they paddled on towards the very spot where we had first struck the lake.

"There are only two of them, and we shall be able to tackle the fellows, whoever they are," whispered the Dominie to me; "they are connected with those who carried off the little girls, and have probably come to meet them; there is no time to be lost, follow me," and he led the way back by the path we had come.

We could occasionally get a glimpse of the canoe, which came slowly on. She was of large size, and there were to a certainty but two paddlers. I could hear poor Rose behind me panting and puffing as we hurried along; still she persevered, prompted by her desire to help us.

We reached a thick clump of bushes, close by the spot towards which the canoe was directing course, and, crouching down, we remained concealed, waiting until the Dominie should give the signal for action. What he intended to do I could only guess, as it would have been imprudent to have spoken, lest our voices should be heard, though the splash of the paddles prevented the sound we made in passing along from reaching the ears of the people in the canoe. Of course we could easily have shot the two men, but as we had no proof of their being enemies, such an act would have been unjust. They shoved in carefully, for fear of knocking the bows against any logs or branches beneath the surface, and then one of them stepped out. As he stood up, with the moonlight pouring full upon him, we saw that he was a white man, with a broad-brimmed hat, a brace of pistols in his belt, and a rifle in his hand. The other person was an Indian, who, after his companion had secured the canoe by a rope to the trunk of a sapling, remained seated, as if waiting his return. The white man looked about him, but did not appear to discover the signs of our having been there. It was a wonder, however, that he did not see us, probably his eyes were dazzled by the bright moonlight. Had the Indian landed, there could be little doubt that he would have perceived us, though we all three sat as motionless as the objects around.

The white man whistled shrilly several times, but receiving no response to his signal, he began to make his way in the direction from whence we had first come, as if he expected to meet his associates. I was doubtful whether the Dominie would follow and attempt to seize him, or would wait until he had got

out of hearing and then endeavour to capture the Indian. This would not be a very easy undertaking, unless he was less watchful than is usually the case with his people. At last the Dominie touched my arm as a signal to me to be prepared for instant action; he then began to creep cautiously forward, so as to get round the bush and close to the canoe, before making the rush which would indicate our presence. I imitated his example, and had no doubt that Rose was creeping after us. Should the Indian possess a rifle, he would probably have time to fire it and recall his companion to his assistance, even if he failed to hit either of us; and at all events he would cry out, and we must master him quickly to be in time to deal with the other man, who would not probably stand on ceremony about using his weapons. On we crept: I could hear my own heart beating, and expected every moment that the Indian would discover us. Presently we saw him stand up in the attitude of listening, as if he had heard some suspicious sounds; his eyes were directed towards the very spot where we were concealed, but the thick bushes prevented a gleam of light falling upon us. He was evidently on the alert, and the difficulty of seizing him was increased. He looked round, but appeared to have discovered nothing. It was important to master him without delay, before the return of the white man, when we should have two people to deal with instead of one.

Again the Dominie began to creep forward; careful as he was, the Indian must have heard the noise, for he again stood up with a bow in his hand ready to shoot. Seeing nothing, he drew in the painter and stepped on shore, advancing a few paces and gazing round him, peering towards where we were crouching down. Should he discover us, he would have time to shoot and afterwards bound away out of our reach. Presently we heard a sound as if some creature, if not a human being, was passing through the forest at a short distance on the farther side of where he stood; he turned his head as if satisfied that it had caused the sounds he had heard, and with his arrow on the string he advanced a pace or two, as if searching for the animal. As we could not expect a more favourable moment for our purpose, the Dominie and I simultaneously sprang forward. With one bound we were upon the Indian, before he had time to turn and defend himself. The Dominie seized him by the neck, and striking his legs we brought him to the ground, when Rose, as he opened his mouth to cry out, thrust into it the handkerchief she had torn from her head. He struggled violently to free himself, but as the black woman was also as strong as a man, we were able to hold him down until she had secured my handkerchief round his legs. The Dominie and I then fastened

his arms behind him, turning him over with very little ceremony. So effectually had Rose gagged him that he was beginning to grow black in the face from suffocation, but we were unwilling to withdraw it, lest he should shout out and warn his companion of what had happened. Lest the latter should hear us, we also did not speak above a whisper.

"The sooner we place our prisoner at a distance from this the better," said the Dominie, and with the assistance of Rose, we lifted him up and carried him almost to the point we had reached when we at first saw the canoe.

He allowed himself to be carried unresistingly along, but we were not deceived by this, as we knew perfectly well that he was but waiting an opportunity to get free. We now thought that we could with prudence take the gag out of his mouth, to try and learn from him what object he and his companion had in view, though we had little doubt about the matter. Mr Tidey made signs that if he cried out, it would be the worse for him. Rose then carefully pulled out the handkerchief. Not a word, however, could we elicit from him; he seemed to suppose that we were going to put him to death, and, stoically resigned to his fate, nothing we could say had any effect.

"Perhaps he doesn't understand English," observed Mr Tidey; "and as he has not his hands at liberty, he cannot make signs; our only safe course, however, is to treat him as an enemy, and keep him bound. Rose, we will leave him under your charge, while we go back and try and tackle his companion. You will not let him escape?"

"No, massa, no fear ob dat," answered Rose, stuffing the handkerchief back into the Indian's mouth, "if he try to move, I soon make him keep quiet."

As the white man might be returning, we hastened back to be ready for him. I suggested that we should haul up the canoe, and knock a hole in her, to prevent the stranger, should he escape us, from getting off; but Mr Tidey thought that she might be of use to us, and advised instead that we should hide the paddles, which would answer the purpose equally well.

We listened as we drew near the spot where the canoe lay, but we could hear no one approaching. Without hesitation, therefore, drawing her to the bank, I stepped into her, and searched about to ascertain what she contained. I soon discovered several pieces of rope, a basket of provisions, and a bottle of rum. It was possible that the Indian's apparent

stupidity had arisen from his having drunk a portion of the latter. The rope confirmed us in our belief that the men in the canoe had come for the purpose of making a prisoner of some one or other. Bringing the rope and paddles, I returned on shore. Scarcely had we hidden them in the bushes than, hearing footsteps approaching, we hurriedly concealed ourselves. Presently the white man we had before seen emerged from the gloom of the trees. We saw him looking towards the canoe.

"What can have become of the rascals?" he exclaimed with an oath, speaking to himself.

He was advancing towards the canoe, expecting probably to find the Indian asleep within her, when Mr Tidey and I sprang so rapidly on him, that before he had even time to turn round, we had him stretched on the ground, the Dominie holding him tightly with one hand on his throat and the other on his right arm, while I held down his left arm and presented one of his own pistols, which I drew from his belt, at his head.

"You know best if this is loaded; and, if it is, should you make the slightest resistance, I will shoot you," I said in a firm tone.

"Who are you, villains, who dare thus attack a free and independent citizen?" exclaimed the stranger, following the inquiry with a volley of abuse.

"Keep a civil tongue in your head and answer the questions we put, or you may have to repent it," said the Dominie. "Why did you come here?"

"I came to look after a rascally black who escaped from his owner, and you will be sorry for having interfered with me in my lawful business."

"We are ready to take the consequences," answered Mr Tidey. "Before we set you free, we intend to learn whether your story is true; so submit quietly, or we shall be obliged to resort to more violence than we wish."

While we were holding down the man, I examined his countenance, and was sure that he was one of those who had so outrageously attacked our house, I therefore felt no compunction at the way we were treating him. Had he shown any courage, he might possibly have freed himself, but we managed—not without some difficulty—to lash his arms behind him, and to bind his legs so that he could move neither hand nor foot.

"The best thing we can do with him is to place him in the canoe, and let him remain there until we have discovered the little girls, for, depend upon it, his companions have carried them off, probably with the intention of holding them as hostages until we deliver up Dio," observed Mr Tidey.

We had also another reason for keeping him a prisoner, to which, however, Mr Tidey did not allude in his presence. Without loss of time, we partly dragged and partly lifted him up to the canoe, into which we tumbled him without much ceremony.

"If you attempt to struggle, you'll kick a hole in the canoe and go to the bottom, my friend; so I would advise you to keep quiet," said the Dominie.

The man only answered with a volley of oaths, but no further information could we draw from him. We therefore left him to his own reflections, while we hastened back to Rose, whom we found seated by her prisoner.

"He stay berry quiet," she said, "an' me no tinkee he run 'way."

"That may be, but we will secure him as we have done his companion," said Mr Tidey, producing a piece of rope which he had brought with him from the canoe; and, dragging the Indian to a tree, we lashed him so securely to it, that we believed with all his cunning he could not set himself free.

"Now let us continue our search for the little girls and Dio," said the Dominie; "depend upon it, they cannot be far off. Probably they are somewhere near the shores of the lake, and if we approach their captors cautiously, we may master them as we have the other man."

I suggested that we should paddle round the shores of the lake in the canoe, and as they were probably expecting her arrival with two men in her, they would not suspect who we were until we got close up to them.

The Dominie, after a little consideration, agreed to my proposal.

"What are we to do with Rose?" he asked.

"She can lie down at the bottom of the canoe, and assist in keeping our prisoner quiet, unless she will consent to remain behind," I observed.

"No, no, me go with massa!" she exclaimed.

As she might be useful, Mr Tidey agreed to her going. We hurried back once more to the canoe, and, lifting in Rose, placed her in the bows near the head of our prisoner, in a position which would enable her speedily to tighten his gag, should he attempt to cry out. We then, taking the paddles, commenced our voyage, I sitting in the bows, Mr Tidey in the stern. We paddled in towards every opening which was likely to afford a spot for camping, but no object could we see besides the tall trees rising up above the water. We had gone some distance, and I had begun to fear that those we were in search of had moved off from the shores of the lake, and that we might have a long march to come up with them, should we discover the direction they had taken, when I perceived a more ruddy tint on the surface of the lake than that reflected by the silvery moon.

"There must be a fire somewhere near the shore," I whispered, "people are encamped there, depend upon it; how shall we proceed?"

"We will land close in here, and then try to steal upon them unobserved, so as to reconnoitre them first. If there are too many people to master, we must wait until some of the party fall asleep, and then try to surprise them. One at least is sure to be on guard; we must knock him over and then spring on the rest. We shall be able to judge better when we ascertain how matters stand," observed the Dominie.

As he spoke he turned the head of the canoe to the shore, which we soon reached. Rose had crammed the handkerchief tight down into the mouth of the prisoner, or he would to a certainty have betrayed us. Even now I was afraid that we might have been seen, but no hail reached us. Making as little noise as possible with our paddles, we soon reached the beach, and, making a sign for Rose not to follow us, we landed, leaving her in charge of the canoe. We both crept forward as cautiously as any Indians could have done. As we approached the fire we heard the sound of voices, and by getting a little nearer we could hear what was said.

"I wonder that fellow Jowl hasn't found us out yet," observed one of the speakers; "we shall have a long tramp for it if he doesn't appear very soon, and the captain and his people will be down upon us. Now that we've got the black, I wish that we had let the girls alone, they'll only cause trouble, for old Bracher won't know what to do with them."

"We'd better leave them, then, to shift for themselves, they'll find their way home somehow or other; it matters little to us if they don't," answered another.

"But they'll betray the whereabouts of our train to the captain, and he'll be after us with his people and demand satisfaction. If he proves the strongest, he'll carry off the black, about whom we have had all this trouble, into the bargain," observed the first.

"If he comes at all, it will give old Bracher an opportunity of shooting him, that's what they'd like to do better than anything else," remarked a third.

The men continued talking on the same subject, but they had said enough as to the girls being carried off. From it I gathered that Mr Bracher was travelling eastward with a waggon train, probably having failed in the west, and that, finding himself in the neighbourhood of our new location, he had despatched a party to try and recapture Dio, but that meeting Kathleen and Lily, they had made prisoners of them with the intention of keeping them as hostages until the slave was delivered up. I also ascertained that Dio had fallen into their hands, and that consequently my sister and Lily were of less value in their sight than would otherwise have been the case.

Although we heard but three persons speaking, there might be many more, but this we could only determine by getting nearer to the camp. I made a sign to Mr Tidey to remain quiet while I crept forward. I stopped whenever there was a pause in the conversation, and stole on when the sound of the voices would prevent them from hearing any noise I might make. My fear was that they might have with them some Indians who would be much more likely to discover me than they were. At length a clump of bushes alone intervened between me and their camp-fire. Carefully raising my head, I looked through an opening, when I saw four men seated on the ground, with their rifles by their sides. A short distance off lay Dio, with his arms bound behind him and secured by a rope to a tree. Still farther was a rude hut formed of branches, beneath the shelter of which, I had no doubt, Kathleen and Lily were resting. So far the men had shown some humanity. To recover the "captives" it was evident that we must use stratagem rather than force. We could scarcely expect to overcome four well-armed men, even should we first succeed in setting Dio at liberty. We might, however, easily shoot two of them, and then spring upon the other two, but as I felt that we should not be justified in so doing, I was

about to retire and tell Mr Tidey what I had seen when one of the men started up, exclaiming—

"I saw some one watching us through the bushes."

I was conscious that the glare of the fire had for a moment fallen on my face. All hope of our surprising them was lost. I heard some one approaching behind me.

"Whoop!" whispered Mr Tidey; "we will try what effect terror will produce."

Raising our voices, we imitated, with some effect, the terrific Indian war-whoop, dropping on the ground as we did so, to avoid a shower of bullets aimed at us.

"Get hold of the black, and let us be off!" cried one of the men; "we must not have had our expedition for nothing."

Before we could regain our feet, one of the fellows cut the rope which held Dio, and, seizing him by the neck, dragged him along across the glade on the opposite side of which the whole party disappeared, passing close to the hut in which we guessed that Kathleen and Lily were confined. Had we before been inclined to fire, we were less willing to do so now, for fear of wounding either the girls or poor Dio, who was placed as a shield by the man who was dragging him along. Our first impulse was to run and rescue the dear ones who had caused us so much anxiety. They shrieked out, overcome with terror, as they heard us approaching, until my voice reassured them. By the light of the fire which streamed into their hut they saw who we were. A few words served to calm them, and make them understand what had happened, and in another minute Rose came running up, unable to restrain her anxiety, she having heard the firing, and fearing that we might be killed or wounded.

"We must not let Dio be carried off if we can help it!" I exclaimed. "Come on, Mr Tidey; let us pursue the fellows, and perhaps they'll grow tired of dragging him along, and set him at liberty."

"Yes, yes, Massa Tidey, you go 'long, me take care ob de little girls. See dar' is rifle, me fight for dem if anybody comes!" exclaimed Rose.

Sure enough one of the men in his terror had left his rifle behind him. We should thus find only three armed antagonists,



unless he had also pistols. At all events, without stopping to consider the risk we ran, we rushed on, again and again uttering a war-whoop. It had only the effect, as far as we could judge, of expediting the movements of the fugitives. Unfortunately the moon became obscured by clouds, and increased the difficulties of our progress.

I began indeed to fear that, after all, we should be baffled, and I knew the sad fate which awaited Dio, should he be carried back to his former master. We had two prisoners, to be sure, but I felt very certain that Mr Bracher would not give up his slave for the sake of recovering them, indeed he would be well aware that we could not keep them in captivity. Several times I thought we were on the point of overtaking the men, but on each occasion they managed to elude us. Whether they still fancied that Indians were following them, we could not tell. Possibly they might have guessed that we were white men, though they could not tell the number of our party, and at all events did not think it worth while to hazard a conflict, now that they had obtained the object of their expedition. How far off Silas Bracher's train was encamped we were uncertain, but we knew that the men could not possibly reach it, if it was on the usual route, until some hours after noon, indeed they could not get out of the wood bordering the lake, until daylight.

"Can you go on, Mike?" asked Mr Tidey.

"I will until I drop, and I don't feel at all inclined to do that just yet," I answered.

"Then let us continue the pursuit, but we'll not whoop again, so that we may possibly come upon them when they least expect it."

The forest was tolerably open, and had it been daylight, we should have been able to see to a considerable distance. I several times took a glance towards the east, and at length I saw the dawn breaking through an opening in the trees. Our only fear was that the fugitives might have turned aside, and that we had passed them. This, however, was not likely to be the case. The light increased, and just we got near the edge of the forest, we caught sight of the four men still dragging on poor Dio.

I don't know what we might have been tempted to do. I saw Mr Tidey more than once raise his rifle, and I confess I was merely waiting for a fair shot at one of the fellows, in spite of the risk of wounding Dio, when my eyes fell on a party of horsemen

galloping along from the northward, having apparently skirted the edge of the forest.

The Kentuckians saw them also, and knowing that if the horsemen were in pursuit of them, further flight would be useless, halted and appeared to be consulting what to do. In another minute I recognised my father and Uncle Denis leading the party. Our friends dashed forward at the fellows. My father was just in time to knock down one of them who had presented his pistol at the black's head, and I fully expected that the four men would be killed on the spot. I saw Dio, however, holding up his hands to protect them, while he explained apparently what had happened. We now showed ourselves, and, hurrying forward, assured my father of the safety of Kathleen and Lily.

"You may go, then!" he exclaimed, turning to the Kentuckians, who now appeared thoroughly cowed, "and tell Silas Bracher, should he again venture to send any of his men to capture this honest negro, they will be more severely dealt with than you have been."

The fellows, without a word of thanks, moved sulkily away towards the south, at a much slower pace than they had hitherto been going. Three of our men now got off their horses, to allow Mr Tidey, Dio, and me to mount, and we rode on through the forest as fast as we could go, until we reached Rose and her two charges; the little girls, having recovered from their fright, had fallen asleep in their bower, while the black nurse sat watching over them.

I had almost forgotten our prisoners, when Mr Tidey exclaimed, "We mustn't let the Indian and that fellow in the canoe starve to death, which they certainly will unless we release them."

"They can do no further harm if set at liberty, though they deserve a pretty severe punishment," said my father. "Where are they?"

"Not far off, and if some of you will come with me, we will send them about their business, with a warning that, should they again attempt to play such a trick, they will not escape so easily," observed the Dominie.

Martin Prentis, I, and two of the men, at once set off with Mr Tidey. We first made our way to the canoe, where we found our prisoner groaning with pain, for, by endeavouring to release himself, he had only tightened the cords with which his arms and legs were lashed. We took him out of the canoe, and from

the expression of abject terror exhibited in his countenance, I suspected that the fellow believed he was then and there to undergo the penalty of 'Lynch law,' for he looked up at the bough of a tree above his head, as if he expected immediately to be triced up to it. I never saw a man so crestfallen.

"Now, my fine fellow, you know what you deserve," said the Dominie, as Martin and the other men placed him on his feet. "You were employed by a greater rogue than yourself; but as you have failed in your undertaking, we do not want to be hard on you, and if you will tell us the intentions of your master, we will set you at liberty. But, if not—," and Mr Tidey pointed to the bough overhead.

"I'll give you all the information you require," exclaimed the man, trembling. "Bracher had sworn to be revenged on you for sheltering his runaway slave, and was determined to get hold of him if he could. He had heard that you were located in this neighbourhood, and he sent a party with orders to capture the black at all costs."

"That doesn't excuse them for carrying off the young ladies, and frightening us well-nigh out of our wits, on their account."

"I had no hand in that matter," said our prisoner. "I suppose that by getting hold of them our people thought that they could force you to come to terms about the nigger."

"Probably," observed Mr Tidey; "but what were your orders, should you fail to recover the black? Remember, we have your Indian guide in our hands, and if you do not speak the truth, we shall be able to learn what we want from him."

"I will tell you everything," answered the man, as the Dominie again glanced up at the overhanging bough. "Silas Bracher has come to grief, and being compelled to sell up, is moving westward with a pretty good-sized party whom he has persuaded to accompany him. We heard on our way that Captain Loraine was located in the neighbourhood. Mr Bracher managed, somehow or other, when we got near this, to make friends with one of the chiefs of the red-skins, who, bribed by the promise of a case of whisky and some fire-arms, undertook to attack Captain Loraine's farm as soon as a good chance of success should offer. The chief, you'll understand, was to bide his time and to bring Silas word directly he had done the work."

"And when is the attack to be made?" asked Mr Tidey.

The man protested that he could not tell, but concluded that it would not long be deferred, probably not more than a week or two, before the train could have got to any great distance, indeed he had an idea that some of their people were to be employed in assisting the Indians.

Mr Tidey, though he cross-questioned the man, could elicit no further information of importance. We therefore conducted him to my father, who, after charging him to keep his own counsel, and not let Silas Bracher know the information he had given, told him that he was at liberty to return to his friends.

Great indeed was his look of astonishment. He not only promised that he would say nothing to Silas Bracher on the subject, but that he would separate himself from him and his party, and join some other emigrant train on the first opportunity. We watched him until he disappeared in the forest, though, judging by the pace he went, we suspected that he was in no great hurry to join his companions.

"We have now to look after the Indian," said Mr Tidey, "and as we shall pass not far from the spot where we left him, we will learn what he has to say for himself, and send him about his business."

As we were anxious to get home as soon as possible, to relieve my mother's mind of anxiety, we lost no time in setting off. My father took up Kathleen and Uncle Denis Lily before them, and, after some persuasion, Rose consented to allow herself to be lifted and placed in front of Dio's saddle. Mr Tidey and I, with Martin, pushed on ahead, that we might without delay set at liberty the unfortunate Indian, who was less to blame than his white employers. On reaching the spot, however, we could nowhere see him. We searched about in every direction. It was evident that by some means or other, he had been set at liberty. Whether he had himself cast loose the lashings, or whether anybody else had liberated him, we could not discover, for although there were the marks of several feet on the ground, they might have been ours. As there was little probability that the Indian would have remained in the neighbourhood, we soon abandoned the search and rejoined the party.

It was late in the evening when we approached the farm, and recollecting the threatened attack by the Indians, I felt more anxiety than I can express, lest during our absence, they should have carried out their project. Great therefore, was the relief to my mind when I saw Biddy running down the hill to welcome

us, followed by my mother to whose charge we soon committed Kathleen and Lily.

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## **Chapter Thirteen.**

**An uncomfortable state of things—Kluko pays us a visit—Startling intelligence—The fate of Silas Bracher—Return to the farm—The Indian's friendship for Dio—The red man's opinion of slavery—Uncle Denis's menagerie—Winter at the farm—We have an adventure—Fight between a sable and porcupine—We capture the combatants—Their appearance—Treatment in the cage—Taming of the sable and urson—Loss of poultry—Imprisonment for life—Something about ourselves.**

The warning we had received of a projected attack on the farm by the Indians compelled us to be on our guard. We kept a strict watch at night, and two or three of us were constantly employed in scouting in the neighbourhood, so as in good time to discover any red-skins who might be approaching with hostile intent. Cunning as they may fancy themselves, they are in reality easily outwitted by the superior intelligence of white men.

We had got so accustomed to this state of things that we took them as a matter of course. Even my mother, Kathleen, and Lily, were not in the slightest degree alarmed, though they became somewhat anxious when my father and uncle, or Dan and I did not return at the hour they expected. We were annoyed chiefly by the interruption to our usual avocations, as, when we had been out all day, neither our worthy Dominie, Dan, nor I were much inclined for lessons. We, however, managed to hunt as usual, as we could at the same time act as scouts, though we ran, it must be confessed, some risk of being caught by any hostile Indians who might be in the neighbourhood. Impunity, however, made us bold, and we were inclined to think that the threatened attack would never take place. The men continued cutting down trees, putting up fences, ploughing, and sowing, as regularly as before, though, by my father's orders, they always carried their arms with them, and piled them close at hand, so as to be ready for instant use.

Mr Tidey, Dan, and I had started on horseback one morning just before daybreak, agreeing to meet at noon at a certain spot about ten miles from the farm, by the side of a stream near a wood, where we could light our fire and cook any game we might have shot. I had had a successful morning's sport, having shot a fawn, a couple of turkeys, and several small birds; and at the hour agreed on I arrived with my horse well loaded at our proposed camp. Finding that the Dominie and my brother had not yet reached it, I collected sticks and lighted a fire, so that I might have dinner ready for them.

While I was so employed, occasionally taking a look round in the expectation of seeing either the Dominie or Dan approaching, I was startled by discovering an Indian who had suddenly emerged from the wood about twenty paces off. My first impulse was to seize my rifle which lay on the ground near me, but a second glance showed me that although he had a bow in his hand, there was no arrow in the string.

"You are not as cautious as you should be, young pale-face," he observed, as he came up to me. "This is the second time I have caught you off your guard; an enemy approaching as I did might have shot you before you had discovered him."

As he spoke I recognised our friend Kluko. We shook hands, and he seated himself by the fire, when I offered him some of the food I was cooking, which would, I knew, suit his taste, though not sufficiently roasted to please our palates.

"I heard the sound of your rifle several times, and I tracked you here, as I wanted to bring you good news," he said.

"I thank you, pray speak on," I answered; "I know that it will give Kluko as much pleasure to tell good news as it will afford me to hear it."

"When I saw you last, I warned you that a party of Blackfeet, instigated by a white man, had undertaken the destruction of your farm: I have now to tell you that they quarrelled with their white friend, and, following his trail as he journeyed westward, they have attacked his camp, and cut him and his people to pieces, carrying off their scalps as trophies."

"Do you speak of Silas Bracher?" I asked.

"That was the name of the white chief; I have no doubt about the matter, although I could not remember it," answered Kluko. "As the red-men obtained all the booty they could carry off,

many times more than the amount of the reward they expected to receive, they are not likely to attack your farm, indeed they are already on their road back to their own hunting-grounds, so you may now rest in peace for some time to come. Should I again hear that they are out on the war-path, I will give you timely notice. You know Kluko is your friend, and that you can trust him."

I assured the Indian that I put full confidence in the information he had brought, and invited him to accompany us to the farm, as I was sure my father would be glad to see him and thank him for the service he had rendered us. He was evidently pleased, and said he would come and see his pale-faced brothers. In a short time Dan and Mr Tidey arrived, and after they had saluted our Indian friend in the usual fashion, I told them of the news he had brought.

"I was very sure that that wretched man would come to a violent end," observed Mr Tidey; "although he intended evil against us, we are bound not to rejoice over his fate; we have been protected by a higher power."

"The great Spirit takes care of those who trust him," observed Kluko reverently.

Having as much game as our horses could carry, we set off to return home. The Indian, although on foot, easily kept up with us, and I could not but admire his firm step and graceful carriage as he moved over the ground, whether rough or smooth. The information he brought, relieved my mother's mind of a constant source of care, but though my father believed it to be true, he still considered it possible that the farm might some day or other be attacked, and insisted that we should continue the precautions we had hitherto adopted to escape being surprised.

Kluko remained with us nearly a month, and won our regard by his quiet, intelligent, and unobtrusive manners. Although dressed in skins, he was perfectly the gentleman, moreover an enlightened and sincere Christian, for he had thrown aside all heathen customs and superstitions. His great object appeared to be to benefit his fellow-creatures. He became strongly attached to Dio, whose history he had heard, and expressed himself highly indignant that any people should reduce another race to slavery.

"They speak with contempt of the red-men, but no red-men, cruel and blood-thirsty as they are, ever do that," he observed.

"When they take prisoners they torture them, it is true, for a short time, but they then put them to death; they would not subject them to a long life of torture of soul and body."

Kluko accompanied us on several hunting expeditions, but he was much less expert than we were in the use of the rifle. He could shoot very well when he got his weapon on a rest, but could never manage to bring down game on the wing. The first time he saw me kill a bird flying, he expressed his astonishment. He had been accustomed to the bow from his boyhood, he said, and, that his people never attempted to shoot at any creature except on the bough of a tree, or running along the ground.

At length he took his departure, promising to pay us another visit ere long, should his life be spared. Month after month went by without any alarms from Indians, while we heard nothing more of the threatened attack on the farm by the Blackfeet.

Uncle Denis was successful in trapping several animals to add to his menagerie. One day he arrived with two wolf cubs, which, although ill-tempered at first, soon became as tame as puppies, though less playful. We obtained also three young fawns, of different species of deer; charming little creatures they were, great pets with Kathleen and Lily, and would follow them round the farm and into the house. They were of course not allowed to go to a distance, lest they might be carried off by any wild animal prowling about. The young wolves at first showed an inclination to bite at them when they came near, but were soon taught better manners, and afterwards never attempted to molest them.

Bruin soon became on the most friendly terms with them, and would roll on the ground, while they leapt over and over his body, and frolicked round and round him. One of the last animals added to the menagerie, was the most difficult to tame, and great doubt was entertained whether it would be prudent to allow it to associate with the other members of the happy family. Uncle Denis arrived with it on horseback in a big bag hung to the saddle-bow, late one evening.

"What have you got there?" we all asked eagerly, as we saw that there was a living creature kicking about in the bag.

"Something which, although at present somewhat inclined to be unruly, will, I hope, before long become as gentle as Lily's pet lamb. I must send it to school, however, at first, to receive



instruction, before I allow it to mix in the world. Here, Mike, take it to the cage; don't let it out until I come and help you."

I took the bag from him, and by the weight I supposed that it contained an animal the size of a large cat. The cage, I should say, was about six feet high and eight square, composed of strong hickory, or oak bars, placed so close together, that no animal could force its way out, while only such as had teeth as strong as those of the beaver, could have bitten through the wood. The door was made to slide from side to side, in order that only as much of it as was necessary need be opened at a time. Uncle Denis, having untied the string of the bag, put the mouth inside, when out bounded a beautiful little animal of a tawny hue, with a long tail and a remarkably small head, somewhat more elongated than that of a cat. On its back and sides were several rows of dark streaks, and on its shoulders some spots of similar colour, resembling those of the leopard. It made towards the opposite bars, but finding it could not get out, began circling round and round the cage, looking very much astonished on finding that, although out of the bag, it could not escape.

"Why, that's a young panther," exclaimed Dan. "Do you hope ever to tame it, Uncle Denis?"

"A 'painter' it is, or rather a puma, to give it its proper name: I have no doubt that in a short time, it will be as gentle as a domestic cat," answered our uncle; "but we must take care not to irritate it, as its temper is none of the sweetest."

The little creature continued running round and round, sometimes leaping up, and trying to scramble to the top of the cage, expecting, probably, to find an outlet in that direction. When at length it found all its efforts of no avail, it seemed to resign itself to its fate. Uncle Denis having brought it some small pieces of meat, it devoured them greedily, and looked towards his hands, expecting more. He gave it a very small portion at a time, refusing to give it any food, until it came humbly crawling up to receive the morsel. He then put in a number of leafy boughs, under which it crawled and went to sleep. The next day it was evidently tamer, and more accustomed to the sight of human beings, and after this, the moment he appeared, it came towards him in a suppliant manner to receive its food. In less than a week, it was perfectly tame, and before a month was over, followed him about like a dog, while it became on perfectly friendly terms with the rest of the animals. At first it evidently stood in awe of Bruin, conscious that the bear had the power of giving it an unpleasant gripe, but

finding itself unharmed, began to play with its shaggy coated companion, and the two in a short time became fast friends.

Once more wintry blasts blew up the valley, the ground was covered with snow, and lakes and streams were frozen over. We had plenty of occupation, both indoors and out, and although the days were short, the moon for nearly half the month afforded us light sufficient to move about with as great ease as in summer. Habited in dresses of fur, we hunted often at considerable distances from home, either bison or deer, or smaller animals.

On such occasions we built a shanty in some sheltered wood, of birch bark, when it was to be procured, or boughs stuck into the ground close together, with a thick mass of snow piled up against them, while a cheerful fire blazed in front.

Very frequently, however, we dispensed with any shelter beyond such as the wood afforded, and, wrapt in our blankets, lay down to sleep on the snow, canopied by the starry vault of heaven.

Uncle Denis and I were out on one of these hunting expeditions, when, as we were following the tracks of a deer through a wood, accompanied by Boxer and Toby, my uncle, who was ahead, made a sign to me to advance cautiously, while he, stopping, concealed himself behind a tree. I crept forward as he desired, not knowing whether he had sighted a deer or a party of Indians on the war-path. On getting up to him, I found that he was observing the movements of two animals, very different in appearance to each other. On the trunk of a fallen tree, stood a porcupine, or urson, with quills erect, looking down on a smaller animal, which I at once recognised as a marten, or rather, a sable, which was gazing up in a defiant way, apparently meditating an attack on the other.

"I should like to catch and tame both those animals," whispered Uncle Denis. "Keep back the dogs or the sable will escape and the urson will treat them in a way they are not likely to forget." The sable was evidently bent on having some porcupine meat for breakfast, and kept moving backwards and forwards, meditating a spring at the nose of its formidable antagonist; but, aware of the power of the latter's tail, was waiting for a favourable opportunity to seize it. The porcupine, though so much larger, and naturally moving only at a slow pace, seemed aware of the superior agility of the sable, which would enable it to spring from side to side, or dash forward and attack it in front, when its armed tail would have been of no avail.

Presently the sable retired to a distance, and I thought would have discovered us, but at that moment it made a dash at the nose of the porcupine, who, whisking round its tail in an extraordinary fashion, sent a shower of darts into the body of its opponent. This did not, however, prevent the latter from seizing it with its sharp teeth and dragging it to the ground.

"Now is our time," whispered Uncle Denis, putting down his rifle and unstrapping his blanket, and I imitating his example, we rushed forward and threw them over the two combatants. The sable, however, managed to spring out, when the dogs gave chase, but we were too much occupied to see with what result. The porcupine in its struggles whisked about its tail, sending several of its quills through the blanket, but the rest of its body being unarmed, we managed to press it down until we had tied the blanket tightly round it. Having secured the urson in a way which made its escape impossible, we turned our attention to the sable, which the dogs had brought to bay, but the brave little creature was becoming faint, from the wounds inflicted on it from the porcupine's tail, the quills from which were sticking out all over one side of its body. Seeing that there was no other way of capturing it, I picked up a stick and dealt it a blow on the head, sufficient to stun it, but not to deprive it of life. While I kept back the dogs, Uncle Denis, kneeling down, pulled out the quills, and then throwing my blanket over the animal, he secured it as we had done the urson. It seemed very doubtful, however, whether it would revive, but my uncle said that he would take it home, and should it recover, would try, with gentle treatment, to tame its fierce spirit. To carry our unusual prizes, we formed a long pole from a sapling, to which we secured the creatures side by side. Placing the pole on our shoulders, we began our homeward march. We had the best part of the day before us, and hoped to reach the farm before dark. The urson, weighed heavily, and sometimes it made a convulsive struggle and very nearly worked itself out of the blanket. The sable for some time lay perfectly quiet, but at last we observed a movement in the blanket, which gave us hopes that it was reviving, and we had to put on additional fastenings lest it should escape. To make a long story short, we at length arrived, pretty well tired with our heavy burden. Our friends were somewhat disappointed on finding that we had brought a couple of living animals instead of the fat venison or buffalo they had expected. We, however, relieved their minds by telling them that we had left the meat of a couple of wapiti and a big-horn sheep *en cache*, and Martin and another man were sent off with the horses to bring it in. We had now to dispose of our captives. The urson was tumbled into the cage, which had

before served as a prison to the young puma, while one of smaller dimensions, with iron bars, served as the present habitation of the sable. I cannot stop to describe the process by which both creatures were tamed. The next morning Kathleen and Lily came eagerly to look at them, as they had never seen anything of the kind before. They were greatly surprised at the size of the urson, which was nearly four feet long; the body measured upwards of three feet, and the tail rather less than nine inches. At first they thought it was a young bear, which, from the long blackish brown hair which covered it, concealing the quills, it somewhat resembled, it having also lost a considerable number of the longer quills in its fight with the sable. It had, however, others on the head and hind-quarters, which were more visible than the short ones on the rest of its body. The urson plays a not unimportant part in the destruction of the forests of North America, as it feeds entirely on the bark of trees. This it separates from the branches with its sharp teeth, commencing at the highest and working its way downwards. Having destroyed one tree, it climbs up to the top of another, and carries on the same process, always proceeding in a straight line, and I have often, when passing through a forest, been able to trace its progress by the line of barked trees, which are sure ultimately to die. It is asserted by some hunters, that a single urson will consume the bark of a hundred trees in the course of a year. Our urson, though it became attached to Uncle Denis and would feed out of his hand, was always an object of awe to the rest of the animals, who seemed well aware of its power of inflicting punishment on any of them who might offend it. Even Bruin held it in respect, and none of them ever attempted to be on too familiar terms.

The sable took even longer to tame than the urson. We used to feed it partly on vegetable and partly on animal diet. In winter it preferred the latter. After it had had its meals, it had the habit of going to sleep so soundly that it was difficult to awaken it. It was about eighteen inches long, exclusive of its bushy tail, and much resembled the ordinary marten in shape. The fur was of a rich brown, with white about the neck, and on the head there was a grey tinge. It was of unusual length for so small an animal, and its most remarkable peculiarity was, that in whatever way the hair was pressed down, it lay smoothly on the animal's back. It extended down the legs to the end of the claws. So tame did it at last become, that it was allowed to roam about at large. Shortly afterwards Kathleen and Lily lost a favourite hen and several young chickens, and as there could be no doubt as to who was the criminal, the sable was doomed to imprisonment for life. Its health suffered in consequence, and in

a couple of years it died, but Uncle Denis got 10 pounds for its skin, so that it thus became far more profitable dead than alive.

I have said little of the doings of my sister and Lily. Both were growing into charming young girls, and certainly looked older than they really were. They were also—which was of more importance—sensible and good, devoted to our mother. I always looked upon Lily as a sister; indeed our mother treated her with the same affection as she did Kathleen.

Months and years went by, faster than I could suppose possible. We brought more and more ground under cultivation, our cattle increased, as did our herds of swine even still faster, while the few sheep we had brought became a large flock. Mr Tidey still acted as tutor to the family. Dan had, however, become almost a young man, and I had long considered myself grown up. We laboured on the farm, hunted and fished and traded in furs; some of the furs we bought from the Indians, and a considerable number we trapped or shot ourselves.

Uncle Denis remained a bachelor, although, when urged by my mother, he sometimes talked of going eastward to look out for a wife. I had no intention of following his example even if he did go. I could not tell whether Lily would consent to marry me, but I determined some day to ask her, feeling now that I should never find her equal in any part of the world.

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## Chapter Fourteen.

**My mother is taken dangerously ill—Dio and I set off to Fort Hamilton—Boxer disobedient—End of our first day's journey—An agreeable addition to our supper—Cat-fish—My dog on the watch—A midnight interruption—Overtaken by the snow—A trying day's march—We are at length able to camp—Strong inclination to sleep—Boxer keeps watch—The red-skins near—Our horses and rifles stolen—We suffer from hunger—We continue our way on foot—Sleep in a hollow tree—Pursued by wolves—We kill one of the pack—Saved by our dog and a buffalo carcass—Worn out—Camp.**

Hitherto our community had enjoyed the most uninterrupted good health, no accidents had even occurred requiring more surgical skill than my father or uncle were able to afford. In this

we were especially fortunate, for we knew of no doctor nearer than Fort Hamilton, and we could scarcely expect him to come in any ordinary case of illness. At length our dear mother began to ail, and her pale cheek and sunken eye showed that she was suffering greatly. One evening, towards the end of the year, the trees being already stripped of their leaves, Lily came to me.

"Our dear mother is, I fear, very, very ill," she said; "I don't think that your father is aware how serious her case is, and unless we can get a doctor to prescribe for her, I am afraid that she will die. I should be sorry to frighten you unnecessarily, Mike, but I am sure it is of the greatest importance that a medical man should see her without delay."

"I am ready to set off this moment, and I will endeavour to bring back a doctor at all costs," I answered.

"Do go, Mike," she said; "and yet I fear that you may encounter dangers on the way, the journey is long, and the Indians are less peaceably disposed, it is reported, than they have been of late, but I pray that God will protect you, and I am sure that He will, when you are performing an act of duty."

"Neither difficulties nor dangers shall prevent me from going, and I feel as you do, that it is most important our mother should have medical assistance. I am the fittest person to go, and I shall have no fears, knowing that you, dear Lily, are praying for me."

"Remember too, Mike, that God will hear my prayers, and grant them too, as He has promised," exclaimed Lily; "what an encouragement it is to know that He does hear faithful prayer, and never fails to attend to it."

As may be supposed, this was not the whole of our conversation. When my father came in, I broke the subject to him; not wishing to alarm him more than necessary about my mother's health, at the same time anxious to obtain his permission for going. He at first hesitated, as I expected that he would do, being more aware even than Lily was of the difficulties of such a journey at that season of the year, when at any time a snow-storm might come on and cover the ground many feet in depth. At last, however, when I told him what Lily had said, he consented. I had intended to go alone, trusting to my rifle for support, should I require more provisions than I could carry on my horse. As soon as I announced my intention of starting, Dio entreated that he might accompany me.

"I will keep up wid you, Massa Mike, however fast you may hab to go. Watch at night when you camp, and will remain by you while I have life, should you be attacked by Indians or grizzlies. Do let me go?" exclaimed the faithful fellow.

"I only hesitated, Dio, lest you might suffer from the weather, should the winter begin before we can get back," I answered.

He thanked me when I consented, as much as if I had granted him a great favour. He at once proposed that, as the winds were already cold, we should put on our warm clothing, so as to be prepared for snow and frost, should it overtake us. As his advice was good, I of course agreed to follow it.

The next morning we were on foot before daybreak. My father had authorised me to offer a large fee to the surgeon, and he sent a message entreating the commandant to allow him to come, and promising to send him back under a strong escort if necessary.

Kathleen and Lily were up to get my breakfast and to see us off.

"May Heaven protect you, my boy, and bring you back in safety with the doctor," said my father, as he wrung my hand.

Other farewells were said, and mounted on our favourite horses, with our rifles and pistols ready to our hands, our buffalo robes and blankets strapped behind us, and our haversacks filled with provisions and cooking utensils hung to our saddles, we set off. The increasing light enabled us to go at a good speed. We had got some distance from home, when looking round I saw that Boxer was following us. I ordered him to go back, but though always obedient, after stopping an instant, he came on again, and as he had volunteered to undergo the fatigues of the journey, I allowed him to come. As soon as I called him, he rushed forward, leaping and barking to show his delight, and then fell behind again, steadily making his way at the heels of our horses. With the first part of the country we were well acquainted, and as the weather promised to be fine, we hoped to make a rapid journey. We got over a good distance during the first day, and camped comfortably in the sheltered nook of a wood near a stream, where our horses could obtain plenty of grass. As it was important to husband our provisions, Dio, who had brought a fishing-line and hooks, fitted up a rod, and was fortunate enough to catch two fine cat-fish. The cat-fish, although its name is not attractive, is excellent when cooked. It has, indeed, a very fine flavour, is firm, white, and very rich. In appearance it is like a diminutive dolphin. It

has double fins in addition to those on its back, and a long beard-like excrescence hangs from each side of its mouth. One was more than sufficient for our supper, but Boxer had no objection to eat the remainder. I was very glad my faithful dog had come, as he assisted to keep watch, and was not likely to allow any foe to approach the camp without giving us warning. Having built a lean-to, we arranged our beds, composed of twigs and leaves, of which there were abundance on the ground, and with our saddles for pillows and our feet to the fire, we rolled ourselves up in our blankets, feeling as comfortable as any people could do on feather beds. I, however, had not been long sleeping, when I was awakened by hearing Boxer barking furiously close to my ears. Starting up I saw a huge white animal, with glaring eyes, staring at us from a respectful distance. Boxer, though a brave dog, had apparently thought it prudent not to attack the creature without arousing me to be ready to assist him. Leaping to my feet, I instinctively seized my rifle, and, remembering the tricks played by Indians, my first idea was that it was an enemy covered up by a wolf-skin, trying to inspect our camp, and perhaps to steal our rifles and other property, should he have an opportunity. I then recollected that an Indian was much more likely to carry off our horses, and looking round I saw them feeding quietly at the spot where they had been left. They could not have seen the wolf, and the wolf could not have seen them. I was convinced, however, that the animal I had seen was really a wolf. On observing me move, huge as it was, it began to slink away, showing that it was alone, and had not the courage to attack a man and a dog. Though I could have knocked it over with my rifle, I did not think it worthy of powder and shot, but calling to Dio, I picked up a thick stick, that had served to poke up the fire, and ran forward. The creature now took the alarm, and bounded off at full speed, Boxer and I following close at its heels. The dog, exerting itself to the utmost, at last made a spring and fixed his teeth in the hind-quarters of the wolf, somewhat impeding its progress. This enabled me to get up and deal several hard blows on the creature's head, one of which, given with more force, or better aim, brought it to the ground, and Dio coming up, we quickly deprived it of life. The skin, from the size of the animal and its rare colour, was of some value, but as we could not carry it with us, we hung it up to the branch of a tree, on the chance of finding it on our return, merely taking some of the flesh to reward Boxer for his vigilance and exertions.



"Dis not good ting to do, Massa Mike," observed Dio, as we returned to camp; "maybe other wolves come, too many for us, when we sleep, and we find hard job to get away from them."

"I don't see why, because we have killed one white wolf, we are more likely to be attacked by the brown ones," I answered; "had we let it escape, we might with more reason suppose that it would tell its fellows."

Dio shook his head, but he let the subject drop, and once more, on reaching camp, we went to sleep, trusting to Boxer to call us if necessary, and as we could not take the wolf-skin, he benefited most by the adventure.

The night had been lovely, the stars were still shining brightly overhead when we awoke. Knowing that it was nearly morning, I proposed that we should breakfast and ride on. There was daylight sufficient to enable us to see our way. Boxer, not content with his plentiful supper, as soon as he saw us moving, started off in the direction of the dead wolf, and when we were on the point of mounting, reappeared with his mouth besmeared with blood, showing how he had been employed. From the way he moved on, I was afraid he had over-eaten himself; he, however, contrived to keep up with our horses. During the night there had not been a breath of wind, but as the sun rose, it began to blow fresh from the east, and soon shifted to the northward, from which quarter a bank of clouds rising rapidly, formed a dark canopy over the sky. On one side the sun shone brightly across the prairie, lighting up its vivid tints of green and brown and yellow, while on the other the whole country wore a wintry aspect. Every instant the wind became stronger and stronger, and the cold increased. Unbuckling our buffalo robes, we put them over our shoulders, drawing down the flaps of our caps to keep our ears warm. Before long it began to rain, but the rain soon changed into snow, which came down thicker and thicker, until, in the course of an hour, the whole face of the country was covered by a sheet of white, making it difficult to distinguish the marks which had hitherto guided our course.

"Dis not pleasant, Massa Mike," observed Dio; "we must push on to a wood, for if de snow falls as it now does, before many hours de horses will not be able to travel through it."

Dio was perfectly right, but the question was whether we could find the desired wood. From my knowledge of the country, I believed that no forest existed for many miles, the intermediate space being one extensive prairie, the very worst description of

country to be caught in by a snow-storm. Still it would not do to pull up where we were, as we had no means of lighting a fire. We urged on our horses therefore, trying to keep as direct a course as possible. The snow, however, fell so thickly, that we could no longer discern objects at any distance. It was difficult, indeed, to steer a straight course, for the flakes quickly obliterated the tracks of our horses' hoofs. We could only judge that we were going right by the wind, which blew on our left cheeks. That, however, veered about, coming in fitful gusts, and driving the snow against our eyes with a force that almost blinded us. Our horses, too, began to grow weary by their efforts to make their way through the snow, and I feared, after all, that we should have to dismount, and lead them on by the bridle. Still it would not do to give in.

"We must push forward, Dio, and perhaps the snow before long will cease," I observed.

"Nebber fear, Massa Mike," answered the faithful black whose teeth were chattering with the cold; "worse things dan dis happen 'fore now, and we got safe out of dem."

I remembered, indeed, my many former providential escapes, and I had not forgotten that my dear little Lily was praying for us. Still matters looked worse and worse. The snow gave no sign of ceasing, while the wind blew more keenly and fiercely than before. The day, too, was drawing to a close. A night on the prairie under such circumstances would be truly dreadful. There was no moon, and with the sky obscured, should the snow continue to fall, we might even possibly become separated. I urged Dio to keep close to me, and I knew that Boxer would not fail to do so. We rode on and on, but our steeds went slower and slower, while the cold had become so intense that I feared we should be frozen if we continued to ride; I therefore, in the hopes of getting my blood into quicker circulation, by the exertion of walking, got off, as did Dio, and we led our horses. I went first, he following close behind me, and Boxer bringing up the rear. The snow had become so deep, that I had to lift up my feet at every step, making the exertion excessively fatiguing. Our horses went on readily enough. As I beat a path, Dio had somewhat less difficulty than I had. At last he begged that he might lead the way to relieve me, but this I would not allow. Severe as was the exercise, I still preferred it to riding. At last, our horses being somewhat rested, having brushed the snow from our saddles, we remounted and endeavoured to urge them on at a faster rate than we had lately been going. The snow suddenly ceased falling. I stood up

in my stirrups to look round, in the hopes of distinguishing a wood in one direction or another where we might find shelter, but one uniform sheet of white covered the whole ground as far as the eye could see. Our great object was to keep in a straight line towards the east, but, as before, we had only the wind to guide us. Scarcely had we gone a hundred yards, when the snow again fell as thickly as ever. I felt the cold creeping over me. Poor Dio I knew must be suffering even more than I was, but not a word of complaint did he utter.

"Long lane, massa, dat hab no turnin'!" he cried out, trying to laugh. "Perhaps 'fore long we come to de wood where plenty of sticks, and we light fire, build hut, an' de horses find grass, an' we sit down warm and comfortable."

"I shall be very thankful if we do," I answered; "but it has become terribly dark. It will be a difficult matter to see a wood, even should we get near one."

"Yes, Massa Mike, but de hosses find it out, even if we don't," answered Dio in a cheery tone; "what we best do is to let dem take dare own way; dey know what the wood is, dough we no see him."

I followed Dio's advice, but our horses showed no inclination to turn either to the right hand or to the left, but ploughed on through the snow, as though unwilling to remain exposed to it as we were; I took out my watch, but could scarcely see the hands, though I managed to make out that it was about five o'clock, and that the sun must have set; indeed, the rapidly increasing darkness assured me that in a short time night would overtake us. I soon could only barely distinguish the outline of my horse's head against the white ground. I frequently spoke to Dio, for fear any accident should make him drop behind, when he might have a difficulty in finding me again.

"Do not lose sight of my horse's tail, whatever you do," I shouted out.

Dio promised to keep me in sight, but that was not so easy, though probably his horse would from instinct keep close behind mine. At last I could scarcely see my own hand when I held it up, and my horse's ears were totally invisible. I had heard of travellers crossing the open prairie perishing in a snow-storm, and I began to fear that such might be our fate, but then I recollected Lily and my little sister. They were praying for us, and I took courage. Several times Dio and I got off to warm ourselves, but as I found on the whole that we made slower

progress on foot than on horseback, we again remounted. I have since wondered how we could have endured the chilling breath of that piercing wind for so many hours. On and on we went, the time appeared longer indeed than it really was, but we had no means of calculating how it went by. Dio continued talking, both to assure me that he was close behind, and to keep up my spirits, though the idea of giving in as long as we and our horses had strength to move, never occurred to me. At length it seemed to me that my horse was verging to one side, as I felt the wind blowing in my teeth, more directly than it had hitherto done, then, after some time longer, a low murmuring sound reached my ears. It was, I fancied, the sougling of the wind among the branches of tall trees. Still I could see no object ahead. Next there came a lull, but the snow did not decrease. Presently I made out what seemed like a large column close to me, on the right hand side, then I saw another on the left. They were the trunks of trees, and from the irregular way the snow flakes fell, I was sure that we had gained the confines of the wood.

"We all right now, Massa Mike," sang out Dio; "dis is de wood: we get off and build a hut under some of dese trees."

On dismounting, as Dio proposed, I found that the snow was scarcely an inch deep. By creeping about we discovered a clump of trees, under the lee of which but little snow had rested. We could feel that there was grass, and were consequently sure that our horses would not stray from the spot. We therefore took off the saddles and saddle-bags, and, having put on their halters instead of their bridles, left them to feed, while we broke off, from the lower branches and bushes, a sufficient amount of dead wood to kindle a fire. It was somewhat doubtful, however, whether the wind would allow us to light it, or if we succeeded in doing so, whether it would scatter the sparks about, and perhaps ignite some of the underwood, so as to set the whole forest in a blaze. Against such a catastrophe as this we had especially to guard. The idea also occurred to me that possibly some old bear might have taken up its winter-quarters in the hollow trunk of one of the trees, but I was satisfied from Boxer's quiet behaviour that such was not likely to be the case; he followed close at my heels wherever I went, and I knew that he would spring forward, should any savage animal be near, to do battle in my defence. Dio and I kept talking the whole time, that we might not run the risk of being separated. As I was groping about, I observed a luminous appearance, somewhat like the embers of a fire, though of a paler hue. It was a mass of touchwood in the hollow of a tree. I put my hand in and broke

off a lump. Though it would not afford flame itself, it would enable us to kindle a blaze. Close below it I discovered a quantity of dry leaves, and we now had the means of making what we so much required, a fire to warm our benumbed limbs. No hunter in the prairies is ever without a flint and steel, and we soon had a cheerful fire, burning away between the roots of a thick tree, round which we crouched with our buffalo robes over our shoulders, Boxer joining us to enjoy the warmth. We had had no food since the morning, and as we began to grow warm our hunger also increased.

"Where are the saddle-bags?" I asked, thinking they were close at hand.

"I put dem down whar' we unsaddled the horses—I go get dem," said Dio. Jumping up he speedily returned with them, bringing also the saucepan and tin mugs, with a water-bottle which was still quite full, but he left the saddles, where they had been first placed on the ground. Our hunger made us immediately apply to the contents of the saddle-bags, while we put on our saucepan to brew some tea, which served more quickly than anything else to restore warmth to our bodies. Poor Boxer, however, came off but badly, as we could only afford to give him a small portion of the bacon and bread, being disappointed of the game we hoped to shoot to feed him. As to building a hut, besides the difficulty of obtaining materials, both Dio and I were so fatigued, that once having sat down we felt no inclination to move about more than was necessary. All we could do, indeed, was to collect a further supply of wood to keep up our fire. On looking at my watch I found that it wanted scarcely three hours to morning. I felt by this time an overpowering inclination to sleep, and Dio, I saw by the way he uttered his words, was affected in the same manner. As far as we could judge the snow continued to come down as heavily as before, but as we were protected by the thick overhanging limbs of the trees, very little fell on us. We could hear our horses cropping the grass, where we had tethered them, and we hoped they would obtain sufficient to enable them to continue the journey the next day. To keep awake any longer I found was impossible, so, drawing my blanket tightly round me, I lay down with my feet towards the fire, as near as I could venture to place them without fear of being burned. Dio was already asleep, and I dropped off immediately afterwards. I do not know how long it was after I had closed my eyes, when I became conscious that Boxer was crawling close to me, licking my face, trembling and whining in a peculiar manner. I was, however, so heavy with sleep, that I did not comprehend for

some time the cause of this. Finding that he could not rouse me, he rushed across to Dio, whose voice I soon heard.

"Some ting de matter, Massa Mike. Wake up, wake up. Boxer know dat red-skin not far off."

Boxer again came back to me and gave a pull at my blanket, which effectually awakened me.

"Red-skins!" I cried out, sitting up and listening. "I can hear nothing."

"Boxer does dough," answered Dio.

The fire had burnt low, a few glowing embers alone remained, insufficient to cast a light to any distance, I sprang up, intending to put some more wood on to kindle a blaze, when the sound of horses' feet reached my ears. "Our animals have got loose at all events, and if we are not quick about it, we shall have a hard job to recover them," I exclaimed.

Without a moment's delay I dashed forward in the direction in which we had left the horses tethered, followed by Dio. They were both gone. If they had pulled up the tether-pegs, and we were under a mistake in supposing that Indians had carried them off, we might easily catch them in the morning. Should we follow them now, we might run the risk of losing ourselves, and indeed it was too dark to see their tracks in the snow; still, hoping that we might come up with them before we lost sight of our fire, we went on, until Dio stumbled over the trunk of a fallen tree, and I, knocking my head against a bough, was almost stunned. I heard Dio cry out, but I was too much hurt to reply. Boxer was close at my heels; he uttered a bark which brought the black to my assistance. In less than a minute I recovered.

"We must go back to the fire," I said, "for we shall be frozen if we remain long away from it."

Just at that moment, looking in the direction of our camp, I saw—unless I was deceived—two figures, on which a flickering flame cast an uncertain light, pass by on the other side of the fire. The alarming thought occurred to me, that we had come away without our rifles, and that, should the persons I fancied I had seen prove to be enemies, we were entirely in their power. On looking again, I could see no one. I told Dio, but he had not seen the figures. My first impulse was to rush forward, to ascertain if our rifles had been taken; then I thought, if hostile

Indians are on the watch, they will shoot us down as soon as we appear within the light of the fire.

"It will be more prudent to ascertain whether any enemies are near," I whispered to Dio; "we will creep up, keeping as close as possible to the trunks of the trees, until we get nearer the fire, and learn what has happened."

We did as I proposed, Boxer keeping close to my heels. This was somewhat suspicious, as it showed that he, at all events, believed that Indians were not far off, he sharing the dislike of all white men's dogs to the red-skins. We managed to creep up to within a short distance of our camp, without, as we supposed, exposing ourselves to view. When we looked round from behind the trunk of a tree which we had gained, we could see no one.

"After all I believe that my fancy has deceived me," I whispered to my companion; "probably the horses have only gone a short distance, to find more grass. We may as well go back and sleep quietly until morning."

We accordingly, without hesitation, returned to the camp. The first thing I did was to look about for the rifles; what was my dismay not to find them where I felt sure they had been left. Our saddle-bags, too, were gone. We walked round and round the fire, to be certain that we were not mistaken, but we could discover neither the one nor the other. We were now convinced that Indians must have visited our camp during our absence, and that our horses also had been carried off. The only surprising thing was, that they had not attacked us. Perhaps they only waited until we were seated before our fire to shoot us; they might suppose that we had pistols, and were afraid of venturing near while we were on the watch. My first impulse was to fly and try to escape, but in what direction should we go? Until daylight, we could not find our way out of the forest. We should in all probability fall into their hands. I never before felt my scalp fit so uncomfortably to my head. The thieves, whoever they were, had, however, left us our blankets, which perhaps had escaped their observation. To stay where we were, with the prospect of being shot, would be madness. Snatching up our blankets, therefore, we secured them over our shoulders, and, followed by Boxer, endeavoured to make our way through an opening, which as far as we could calculate, led towards the east. We went on groping our way, sometimes falling over logs, but managing again to recover our feet. It was better to keep moving than to sit down. Although the cold in the forest was much less than in the open prairie, it was still very

severe, and we might very easily be frozen to death. Our chief consolation was, that day would soon return, and that we might at all events be able to see our way. We were still a long distance from the fort, and even should we ultimately reach it, the delay of sending medical assistance to my dear mother might be of serious consequence. Daylight at last returned, but not a break in the sky indicated that the snow was about to cease. It was important to keep under the shelter of the trees as long as we could. Should we venture after we got out of the forest to cross the open prairie without weapons to defend ourselves against enemies, or any means of obtaining food? Dio and I decided that it must be done at all risks; that on we would go as long as our legs would carry us. It was now broad daylight. We were making our way on, when we came to a stream, which flowing but slowly, had been frozen over during the night. As I knew the rivers in that locality ran more or less to the eastward, it would assist in guiding our course, but the appearance of the ice did not encourage us to use it as a high road. We settled therefore to keep along the bank, crossing it or cutting off angles as might appear advisable.

"Before we go far, I tink we get arms," said Dio; "dat saplin' make good spear." And taking out his axe, he cut down the young tree, while I formed a heavy club from a branch of hickory, which had been torn off apparently by a storm. If we had had time, we might have formed bows and arrows, but the cold was too great to allow us to do so, until we had put up a hut in which to work; besides, before they could be finished, we might starve with hunger. We therefore contented ourselves with the weapons we had formed, and Dio having scraped one end of his pole into a sharp point, we continued our journey.

We had not gone far, when we discovered a hollow tree, and as we were very weary, besides being hungry, after examining it, to ascertain that it was unoccupied, we crawled in. We had not much fear of being attacked by the Indians, who, although they certainly could have followed our trail, would, we concluded, have made us prisoners or put us to death when they had us in their power, should they have been so disposed. The tribes of red-skins are not all equally blood-thirsty, some being addicted rather to stealing horses and cattle than to murdering the whites; and we had no doubt that such were the people who had carried off our horses and rifles. We therefore, squatting down in the confined space of the tree, folded our arms across our breasts, and immediately dropped off asleep. Weary as I was, my slumbers were troubled and far from sound. I did not intend to rest more than an hour at the utmost, as I was afraid



of wasting too much precious time. Before that period had elapsed, I opened my eyes and awoke Dio. Looking out, I found that the snow had ceased. I could nowhere see Boxer. I called to him again and again, but he did not come.

"He gone to de hunt for himself," observed Dio; "perhaps he come back with young hare or 'possum."

We waited a few minutes. As I knew that Boxer would follow up the trail as well as any Indian could do, I did not think it necessary to wait for him. Scarcely had we recommenced our journey, when the well-known howl of a wolf reached my ears, repeated by several other brutes of the same species. Had we possessed our rifles, we should not have been afraid of a hundred of them, but, unarmed as we were, it would be difficult to defend ourselves against them, should they follow us. To retreat to the hollow tree would be useless, for although we might keep them at bay, should they besiege us, we might starve before we could regain our liberty. We therefore continued our course, hoping that they would not scent us out. The sounds of barking and yelping increased. It made me fear that Boxer had fallen into their power; if so, he would long ere this have been torn to pieces, and there would be no use in going to his rescue. We were close to the stream, when, on looking round, I saw an animal coming out of the wood on the opposite side. At first I thought it was my faithful dog, but a second glance showed me that it was a wolf—a savage looking brute it was too. The sight of one wolf however, did not give us the slightest alarm, and even if I had had my rifle in my hand, I would not have shot it. When we stopped, the wolf stopped and looked at us, but as soon as we went on again, I saw that it was following, though at a respectful distance.

"Nebber fear; if he come near, I gib him poke with my spear," said Dio; so on again we went.

The howls which we had before heard, again broke out, and the brutes appeared to be coming nearer.

"We must keep ahead of them at all events, Dio," I observed; "if we cross the river, they are less likely to follow. Let us push on!"

We reached the ice, which appearing firm, we ventured on it. As it bore our weight better than we expected, we could now run on at a quick pace. I led, Dio following close behind me.

"Go on, massa! go on!" I heard him sing out continually.

I kept verging towards the opposite side of the stream, where the ground was more open, and I hoped that we should make better progress. Presently I heard Dio utter an exclamation, and looking round, I saw a wolf close at his heels, while several more were following at a short distance. Should the brute once attack us, it would be the signal for the others to set on us.

On the impulse of the moment, not thinking of what he was about, Dio took off his cap and threw it at the brute, which stopped, and quickly tearing it to pieces, came rushing on faster than before. Dio, now again turning round, pole in hand, stood ready for the attack, the next instant he plunged it into the wolf's side, pinning the creature to the ice. Even then, so violent were its struggles, that it would have broken away, had I not come up and finished it with a blow of my club.

"On now, massa! on!" cried Dio; "dey rest stop an' eat their friend, and we get 'way."

This was obvious enough, and we set off running as fast as we could over the ice. Several loud cracks, however, warned us that it would be prudent to gain the shore as soon as possible, although we might not make our way so fast over it as we had been doing on the ice. As I glanced over my shoulder, I saw that the pack had attacked their comrade, and were busily employed in devouring his carcase. They would not, however, take long in doing that, and we might soon expect to have them at our heels. Hungry as we were, our strength was not exhausted, and we resolved not to give in while life remained. We might hope to reach some place where we could defend ourselves until the savage pack had grown weary of besieging it. We had gained a considerable distance, and were almost out of hearing of the yelping and barking, when again those horrid sounds began to draw near. The brutes had eaten up their companion, and were once more on our trail. How many miles we had run I could not tell, when we saw that the pack were rapidly gaining upon us, and that we should have to stop and fight for our lives. As I was expecting every instant that we should have to turn round and commence the battle, I saw a dark object on the ground, and at the same moment I heard a bark, uttered certainly not by a wolf. Presently a dog came rushing towards us whom I at once recognised as Boxer, holding a huge piece of meat in his mouth. Regardless of the wolves, he leapt up as if to offer it to us. A short distance off lay a buffalo bull, which probably had been shot by some hunter, and had there fallen down and died. Taking the meat, I threw it towards the wolves, then Dio, Boxer, and I continued our flight,

passing close to the bull. We were saved from the imminent danger which had threatened us, for the wolves would certainly be delayed long enough over the carcase to enable us to make good our escape. I was rushing on, when Dio cried out—

“Stop, massa, I git out some meat for our supper.”

With his axe he quickly cut off a huge piece of the flesh. The morsel I had thrown to the wolves, had delayed them longer than I might have supposed. The brutes having stopped to quarrel over it, had furiously attacked each other, so that we were already a considerable distance beyond the buffalo before they reached it. So completely did it occupy their attention, that they no longer thought of us, and at length, when we from a distance looked back, we could see a tossing, moving mass of animals, their barks and yelps sounding faintly in our ears. Hungry as we were, I thought it prudent not to stop until we could reach some sheltered place where we could light a fire, and at the same time, defend ourselves, should any of the pack follow us. We had been saved from one danger, we might hope to escape others. The wind had fallen, though it still blew from the north, and the cold was severe. The exercise, however, kept us warm. We were again in open ground, but we could see the wood ahead, bordering the stream, an angle of which we had cut off. Continuing on, we once more gained the wood, and soon fixed on a spot for camping. Near it was a tree, the branches of which we could reach, so that should the wolves again come near us, we might climb up out of their reach. Collecting sticks, we soon had a fire lighted, and a part of our meat spitted and roasting before it. As we had lost our buffalo robes, it was absolutely necessary to form some sort of shelter, and while our supper was cooking, we began to collect materials for forming it. Well accustomed to such work, we did not take long about it. The necessary stakes were cut, the branches and pieces of bark collected, and by the time Dio pronounced the meat “done,” we had our hut up, resting against the trunk of a tree. Had we not been so busily employed, we could not have waited so long without food. Tough as was the meat, it greatly restored our strength, while we quenched our thirst with handfuls of snow. I had not before felt sleepy, but scarcely had I swallowed the food, than I became almost overpowered by drowsiness, and had just sense enough to crawl into the hut, when I dropped off to sleep.

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## Chapter Fifteen.

**Sufferings from cold—Kindness of Dio—A weary march—  
Trails of buffalo and deer—More snow—We reach a wood  
where we camp—Indians—Dio scouts—Possibility of being  
separated—I charge the Black with my father's message—We  
steal near the Indians' camp—Recover our horses—The flight  
and pursuit—Dio and I part company—Jack put on his  
mettle—On the edge of a precipice—My horse fails me—A last  
effort to escape—Rescued—The mysterious hunter—A blank  
in my existence—I recognise my preserver—A strange  
discovery—Lily's father found—Uncle Michael—Regaining  
health and strength—Spring—Return to Smiling Valley—  
Meeting of the brothers—Conclusion.**

Accustomed as I was to a life in the wilds, to endure the extremes of heat and cold, and what most persons look upon as hardships; I am sure that I should have perished with cold had it not been for my faithful companions Dio and Boxer. The dog, I will not say from instinct, because I believe, that he was influenced by a higher power, stretched himself upon me, giving me the warmth, of his body, while Dio chafed my feet, and then wrapped them up in a part of his own blanket, while he sat up, having raked the fire as near as he could venture to bring it. During the whole night I am convinced that he did not once drop asleep, at all events for more than a few minutes at a time. After several hours I awoke, feeling thoroughly warm. I was somewhat astonished at the heavy weight above me, and it was not until I put out my hand and felt Boxer, that I was aware how I had been cared for. By the light of the fire, which was still burning brightly, I saw Dio seated at the entrance of the hut. I told him how much refreshed I felt, but I had great difficulty in persuading him to crawl in and take the rest he so much required. Having put on my boots, I sat up and took his place, I was thus able to judge of the suffering he had endured for my sake, for even with my blanket round me, and a fire near my feet, I could scarcely bear it: I was very thankful when in less than an hour I saw daylight appear. Without delay I made up the fire and spitted some more of our buffalo meat to roast, that we might take breakfast before starting. I waited until the meat was cooked before arousing Dio.

"Go on, massa," he exclaimed, starting up, "I wonder whether we get to the fort 'fore night."

"I am afraid not," I answered; "on horseback, in fine weather, we might have reached it in five days, but we have performed

scarcely half the distance. Never mind, we have got meat for one day more, and we may trap an opossum or beaver, or perhaps Boxer may catch us something."

As soon as we had breakfasted, and bestowed a small portion of our meat on Boxer, Dio shouldering his spear, and I my club, we began our march. As the sun rose, the clouds cleared away, and we knew that we were proceeding more or less in the direction of the fort. Still I could not tell how much out of our proper course we had gone during the last two days, and we might possibly pass the fort, either to the north or south, without seeing it. Had the ground been free from snow, I should have hoped, without much difficulty, to have struck the trail running east and west, followed by emigrants; but none were likely to have passed since the snow had fallen, and the country was generally so level that there were no land-marks to steer for; all we could do, therefore, was to push on, and keep up our spirits. Had I not been anxious about my mother, I should have cared much less for the delay; but as it was, I determined that no difficulties or dangers should stop us. As we went on, I looked out eagerly for marks of footsteps; of either men or horses, but the same uniform sheet of white appeared on every side, though our own feet left their impression more clearly than we desired on the snow, showing that two men and a dog had passed that way. Should any Indians come across our trail, knowing that they could obtain an easy victory, they would too probably follow us up. At length I saw the snow disturbed by a long line running at right angles to our course. On reaching it, I at once saw that the trail was that of a herd of buffalo moving southward, but none of the animals were in sight, though from the marks I calculated that they could only just before have passed. Soon after we met with the tracks of several deer, but they too had disappeared. The country ahead had a more hilly aspect, and I observed that the snow had melted from the southern sides of the slopes. It was of the greatest importance that we should reach another wood before nightfall, and hoping to find one on the other side of the range, we hurried on. I became conscious of my decrease of strength by finding a greater difficulty than usual in climbing the slopes, and on looking at Dio, I found that he too was toiling on with less activity than was his wont. We had only enough meat for one more meal for ourselves and dog, and I saw that it would be necessary, for the sake of our future progress, to bring our day's journey to an end as soon as possible. There was another reason for this. As we looked northward, we saw the clouds again gathering in the sky; and the wind, shifting round to that quarter, quickly drove them towards us, blowing as keenly as

before. Once more the snow began to fall. When I turned round I observed how quickly it obliterated over footsteps. I had carefully noted the direction of the wood which commenced at the foot of the hill, and we therefore reached it without difficulty. Making our way onwards, we soon selected a spot for camping, and although it was still early in the afternoon, I resolved to remain there, at all events, until the next morning. While looking about for fire-wood we discovered a large hollow tree, and as we had plenty of time, we cleaned it out, so that it would serve as a comfortable abode for the night. We collected also a quantity of dry leaves, with which we could cover ourselves up, should the cold become as intense as on the previous night. We also searched about for some slabs of bark, to line the rougher parts and to close up the aperture. While I was arranging our intended abode for the night, Dio, followed by Boxer, went off to catch, if he could, some small animal or bird which he might kill for our supper; I had lost sight of him, but felt very sure that he and his companion could find their way back. Having made up the fire, I was on the point of lighting it, when Dio appeared running towards me.

"Oh! Massa Mike!" he exclaimed, almost breathless, "I see de Indians on top ob de hill!"

The snow, which blew in their faces, had, however, prevented them from seeing him. What should we do?

"Fortunately, as the falling snow will have filled up our trail, they will not know we are here," I observed; "the best thing we can do is to creep into our hollow tree and remain quiet; perhaps they will choose some other part of the forest to camp in, and if so, they will not discover us. Were we now to try and escape through the forest, they would nearly to a certainty fall on our trail and follow us up, whereas we may hope that they will not enter it to camp, until they have got further to the eastward; if, however, they do camp close to us, our only safe course will be to walk boldly in among them, and tell them that we wish to be friends, and that we will reward them for any assistance they may give us."

"Den, massa, we hide in de tree," said Dio.

Had the snow not been falling, I knew that, should they pass within fifty yards, they would discover our footsteps; but even in the thickest part of the forest, it so quickly covered the ground, that I hoped they might not see our trail.

Having scattered the sticks we had collected for our fire, we clambered into the hollow tree, followed by Boxer, and drew in after us the pieces of bark, one of which was of sufficient size to block up the whole of the entrance. We kept two small apertures, through which Dio and I could look on the proceedings of the red-skins. I was of course well aware that should the eyes of any of the party fall on the tree, our place of concealment would immediately be discovered, as they would at once detect a difference in the bark. The opening was towards the south, and enabled us to command a view for a considerable distance through the trees, to the very edge of the forest. We had not long taken our posts, when a body of Indians came in sight, some on horseback, others on foot. There were no women among them. Even at that distance, we could see that their faces were painted, and their heads bedecked with feathers, showing that they were out on the war-path. As we watched, we felt greatly relieved to find that they kept outside the forest, apparently not intending to enter it, though they rode as much as possible under the trees, for the sake of the shelter they afforded. At the rear of the line came two warriors, mounted, I knew, from the appearance of their saddles and the look of the animals, on our horses. I thought it probable, however, that they were not the thieves, but had stolen them from another party, because, being on the war-path, I felt confident that they would have taken our scalps as well as our property.

For fear that any stragglers might be following and see us, we remained carefully shut up in the hollow tree, until we believed that they had got to a distance. Still it would be unsafe to light a fire, in case they should encamp even at a mile distance, for they would observe the smoke, although they might not see the glare of the fire.

Dio at last begged that I would allow him to go and try to find out where they were, promising to take very good care not to be caught. I would rather have gone myself, but he entreated me to remain with Boxer. Should we find that they had gone on, we might then safely light our fire, and cook the remainder of our buffalo meat, which we should otherwise be compelled to eat raw. To keep myself warm, I climbed into the tree, and closed the entrance, with Boxer by my side. Anxious as I felt, I before long fell asleep.

I was awakened by Dio putting in his head.

"Dey camp too near to let us light fire," he said, "but nebber mind, dey turn de horses loose, and our two mustangs come dis way."

"The red-skins don't think we are near them, that's very clear," I answered. "We will try to recover our own horses, though I am afraid it will be more difficult to get back our saddles and saddle-bags, or our rifles. Our horses know us, and will come at our call, even though they may be hobbled. If we can manage to get them, we must ride directly for the fort. Now, Dio, it is possible that we may be separated, and if so, I charge you to deliver the message I received from my father, to entreat that the surgeon may be sent off immediately. If there is no one else to accompany him, you must go, should I not have arrived. I only say this in case of accident. We will do our best to keep together, but still we may fail to do so. Do not suppose, however, though I may not appear, that I am lost; I can picture a dozen events occurring, which may prevent me from soon reaching the fort, though I may do so at last. You understand me, Dio? Take care also not to alarm the family, but repeat to them what I say to you. You will promise me?"

"Yes, Massa Mike," answered Dio, looking me earnestly in the face; "but it break dis niggar's heart, if you nebber come home."

"Have no fears on that score," I answered, wishing to encourage him. "If you manage to catch one of the horses and I should fail, I repeat again, that it is of the greatest consequence that you should push on to the fort; of course we may get there together, or you may lose your way, or I may get there first. Do you understand my object?"

"Yes, yes, massa; an' I promise to try and get to de fort, and to take de doctor to Missie Lorraine," answered the faithful Black, in a melancholy tone, showing that though ready to follow out my injunctions, he grieved at the thoughts of being separated from me, when perhaps I might be caught and killed by the Indians.

"But, Massa Mike, we try and keep togedder, won't we?" he added.

"Of course, Dio, both for your sake and my own, you may depend upon that; I give you these instructions only on the chance of our being separated."



Dio clambered inside, and closing the entrance, we sat down, with Boxer at our feet, thus enjoying more warmth than we should otherwise have done.

We passed the time in chewing pieces of the raw buffalo meat, which, tough as it was, served to keep up our strength. Boxer came in for a larger share than he would have obtained probably, had it been cooked.

We might, of course, have avoided the Indians and continued our journey during the night, but, should no more snow fall, we felt sure that they would discover our trail, and follow us up, whereas, could we regain our horses, we might, before daylight, get to such a distance from them, that they would be unable to overtake us. The other alternative was to stay in our place of concealment, until they had taken their departure, but then our food was exhausted, and as they might possibly remain two or three days, we should be starved. We decided, therefore, that our best plan was to try and recover our horses, as we had proposed.

We waited until darkness came down on the earth, and then, getting out of our hiding-place, stole cautiously towards the Indian camp. We could proceed but very slowly, as we had to make our way among fallen logs, between the trunks of trees, and round clumps of bushes, too thick to penetrate. We stopped also frequently to listen for any sounds which might show us that we had got near the horses. Dio had been enabled to ascertain on which side of the camp they had been turned loose. Boxer kept close at our heels, apparently understanding the danger of our expedition. At length a glare on the leafless boughs of the trees some way ahead showed us that we were approaching the camp. On we crept; once more we stopped to listen. Although I could not distinguish what was said, I was satisfied, from the loud and continuous tones, that one of the chiefs was addressing his braves, perhaps exciting them to attack the fort of the pale-faces. The rest of the people kept a perfect silence while he spoke. I knew therefore that their attention would be absorbed, and that we consequently should have a better chance of catching the horses unobserved, than had the people been moving about and engaged in the usual occupations of a camp. Still I did not forget that they were habitually on their guard, and might have sentries on the watch outside the camp. We had now to consider in which direction we should most probably find the horses. We might have to make almost a circuit of the camp. I resolved to go to the right, where, as the forest was more open than on the other side,

there would be a greater probability of the animals finding grass. I touched Dio's arm, and we moved away in that direction. We had already got to the south of the camp, when we came to the edge of a glade, in which we could distinguish several horses feeding. Unfortunately, however, but few trees intervened between them and the fire, and, should we alarm them, the quick eyes of the Indians would probably observe their movements. It was impossible in the dark to distinguish our own animals from the others. We waited, in the hope that they might come near us, and, recognising our voices, allow us to mount them; whereas, the Indians' horses, knowing us to be strangers, would keep at a distance. Still it was important not to lose time. The chief might bring his speech to an end, and there would be a greater chance of our being discovered. To my satisfaction I saw that the heads of some of the animals were directed towards us, and, as they turned up the snow to get at the grass beneath, they came nearer and nearer. I could hear my heart beat with eagerness. Presently one of them stopped feeding, and, looking about, gave a low whinny, then shuffled forward. Directly afterwards another, a little way behind, did the same, and I felt assured that they were our own horses, which had scented us out.

"You catch the first, I'll look after the other," I whispered to Dio; "steer for that star appearing above the trees, it will at all events take us clear of the forest."

The first horse, from a white patch on his shoulder, I recognised as Dio's, and knew that it would readily consent to his mounting. I had little doubt that the other was mine. We had our knives ready to cut the hobbles, the work of a moment. If we could once mount we should get a good start, as the Indians would be delayed in catching their steeds and setting their legs at liberty.

"Now is your time," I said to Dio.

We both crept forward on our hands and knees, so that we might perform the first necessary operation of cutting the thongs which secured our horses' legs, before showing ourselves. I saw Dio reach his horse,—in an instant his sharp knife had set its legs free; following my directions, he mounted. Mine gave another whinny, and came up to me. The Indians must have heard the sound, for I saw them start, and several who had been seated round the camp-fire sprang to their feet.

"On, Dio, on; I'll follow you in an instant," I cried out, as I worked away with my knife; but it was blunter than usual, and I

had to make several hacks before I could cut through the tough hide. Ere I had done so, Dio, urging on his animal, was already at a considerable distance. Whether or not the Indians had discovered him, I could not tell; but they must have seen me, for as I rose to my feet, about to mount, leaving their camp-fire, they came rushing forward. I sprang on to my horse's back, and pressing my knees into his side, patted him on the neck. "Now, Jack," I cried, "show what you're made of. Don't let those fellows catch us."

The horse, knowing my voice, obeying as if he had understood what I said, galloped forward. I looked ahead, but could nowhere see Dio. I believed that my animal would follow the course of the other horse. I was very certain that in a few moments I should have the whole pack of Indians at my heels. If I could lead them on one side or the other, I might give Dio a better chance of escaping. Brave Boxer kept close to me. I stooped to avoid the boughs under which my horse carried me. He seemed as eager to get away from the Indians as I was. I could hear them shouting and shrieking as they ran to catch their horses. Several arrows whistled over my head, or fell beside me, but they were afraid of shooting low, for fear of wounding their own horses, which were between me and them. In another minute, however, I was out of their sight among the trees. Although it was night, there was sufficient light, I feared, to enable them to discover my trail. Not that I thought much about that at the time, or anything else but the idea of escaping. My horse made too much noise as he galloped over the crisp ground, to allow me to hear whether they had yet mounted, and the only sounds from behind me which reached my ears were their shouts. Presently, however, these ceased, and I then knew that they were pursuing either Dio or me. I had had, however, a fair start. My hope rose high that I should be able to keep ahead of my pursuers. It was important, however, to get out of the wood as soon as possible, or they would, by going faster over the ground, make their way round, and be ready to meet me as I emerged from it. A narrow glade opened out before me, leading in the direction I wished to take; it was formed either by deer or buffalo, who, from constantly following the same tracks, are the chief road-makers of the primeval forests. I dashed along it; fortunately neither fallen trunks nor stumps impeding my progress. As may be supposed, I looked out eagerly for Dio, and I thought it very possible that I might fall in with him, but no signs could I discover of his having passed that way, as the snow lay unbroken along the whole path. I dared not turn my head to ascertain whether the Indians had yet entered the opening. I was encouraged, however by

believing that they were not better acquainted with the country than I was, and that they would have no advantage over me in that respect.

It was no easy matter to stick on to the bare back of my horse, and had he not gone steadily forward, I could scarcely have done so. On and on I went; if I could continue my course until daylight, I hoped that I might get into the neighbourhood of the fort, and perhaps meet with some of the garrison out hunting deer or buffalo. It was a question, however, whether my horse would hold out so long. At present, he was behaving beautifully, and showing no signs of flagging. My earnest prayer was that Dio's would behave as well. As long as the glade was level I had little doubt about his keeping up the same pace, but should it come uneven, with rocks to pass over, or hills to climb, I feared that he might give in. How many miles I had gone over, I could not tell. The open prairie was at length reached; no Indians had appeared. Some way farther on I caught sight of a rocky height against the deep blue sky, running directly across my course. If there was no path through it, I must surmount it, and with my tired steed, this would cause delay, and probably, should the Indians be pursuing, they would catch me up. The task, however, had to be accomplished; I rode forward; it was farther off than I expected, but at length I reached it. I soon found from the way my poor horse went, that I must dismount.

Taking him by the halter, which had served as my bridle, I began to climb up over the uneven ground. On gaining the top, I took one glance round and made out some dark objects moving over the plain towards me. A shout reached my ears; I had been seen; but my pursuers would have to climb up as I had done, and could I reach the bottom in safety I should gain on them. I was well aware that the descent was more difficult and dangerous than the ascent. On I went: to my dismay I came to the edge of a precipice; it was of no great depth, but both my horse and I might break our legs should we attempt to leap it, though Boxer might have performed the operation without danger. I rode along, hoping to find a more practicable path; I had, however, to ascend some distance, and then continue along the side of the hill, before the slope was sufficiently gradual to permit me again to descend. I was aware that I had spent much precious time in searching for a way down, and that, should I be delayed much longer, my enemies would be upon me. I felt like a person in a dreadful dream. I had got but a short distance down, when I saw that, even although I was leading my horse, there would be a great risk of our being rolled over. Still I hurried on, when again a precipice

yawned before me. Its depth I could not distinguish. Once more I led my horse upwards, and then continued, as before, along the side of the hill. At length I came to a slope, which, although rough, seemed practicable. I might even ride down it if necessary, but without a saddle there was the danger of slipping over the horse's neck. Boxer, as if satisfied that we could get down, sprang forward. I followed, my tired steed slipping down on his haunches. I had got about half-way to the bottom, when I heard a shout, and for a moment looking round, I caught sight of the figures of several Indians standing on the brow of the hill, their outlines clearly marked against the sky. The next instant a flight of arrows came flying after me. I heard them strike the rocks behind, and on either side. Others followed, and I felt that I was wounded; I hoped, however, but slightly. It would be better to be dashed to pieces than be made a captive, or a target; so, springing on my horse's back, I urged him down the steep descent. Gathering up his legs, he dashed forward, while I leant back as much as possible, to throw the weight off his shoulders. How I reached the bottom I could scarcely tell. By this time the dawn had broken, and the daylight was rapidly increasing. It enabled the Indians to see me more clearly, and I knew that they would soon be close at my heels. My poor horse, too, was becoming weaker and weaker, although, as he heard my voice, he endeavoured to spring forward. The ground was far more uneven than any I had passed over on either side of the hill. My pursuers' horses, however, were probably suffering as much as mine was, but, then, should theirs fail them, they might dismount and follow me on foot. Notwithstanding this, I had no thought of giving in, and determined, should my horse fall, that I would try the speed of my legs. I could run as fast as most Indians, boasting as they do of their swiftness of foot. Some distance before me appeared a wood, bordering a stream: I determined to try and gain it, and dismounting, to leave my poor horse to his fate, when I would make my way along the bank, and then cross the stream, if it was sufficiently shallow to allow me to ford it, so that the Indians might possibly lose my trail. The intermediate ground, however, was very rough. Twice already my horse had stumbled and nearly come down on his knees. Not having a bit in his mouth, I had no power to keep him up. In spite of the difficulties to be surmounted, I had hopes that I was once more distancing my pursuers, when my poor steed fell. I was thrown over his head but alighted on my feet. My first impulse was to turn round and help him to rise. As I did so, I saw the Indians coming on, several of them on horseback, but others on foot. Although my horse was trembling in every limb, I leaped on his back, and with indomitable spirit he sprang forward. It was but

for a few minutes; before I could reach the wood he came down again, and I, being thrown with far more violence than before to the ground, was almost stunned. I lay for some seconds unable to move. I could hear the shouts of the Indians, as they thought that they had at length secured their prey. Boxer barked furiously in return and ran to my horse to try and make him get up, but the poor animal's strength was exhausted. I, too, made an attempt to rise. It was with difficulty that I could get on my feet. I saw at a glance that my horse could no longer avail me. The Indians were advancing with their scalping-knives in their hands; in another minute, unless I could escape, I should be in their power. Life was sweet, notwithstanding the pain I suffered from the fall, and from the wound I had just received. Mustering up my remaining strength, I turned to fly. In vain, however, were all my efforts; the Indians came on whooping and shrieking; at every bound they were gaining upon me. Had I possessed a weapon, I would have fought for my life, but escape by flight was impossible. Their scalping-knives flashed in the rising sun. I raised my eyes to take one farewell look, as I supposed, of the blue sky above me, and patted the head of my faithful dog, who affectionately licked my hands, conscious of the fearful predicament in which we were placed, and as if to say, "I am ready to stop and die with you, my master." Had they chosen it, the Indians might have sent a dozen arrows into my body, but, although they had their bows in their hands, they refrained from shooting. At that moment, when all hope seemed lost, I heard a shout coming from out of the wood behind me, and the words—

"Run for it, friend!"

I did not require a second summons, exerting all my remaining strength, I turned and hastened in the direction whence the voice proceeded. I saw two persons with rifles in their hands, one a white man, the other an Indian. The next instant I fell fainting to the ground. I heard loud voices, but no shot was fired. The white man was addressing the Indians, and they replied. I in vain endeavoured to arouse myself, and in a short time became totally unconscious of what was passing around.

When my senses returned, I found myself in a roomy wigwam of birch bark, the floor was lined with fine mats, and there were two skin-covered couches, besides the one on which I lay. Several weapons, cooking utensils, and other articles, hung to the supports, while round the walls were piled up packages of skins. At my side lay Boxer, looking sleek and fat, as if he had recovered from his fatigue and had been well cared for. He and

I were the only inmates of the hut. Though I talked to him he could give me no information as to what had happened, or how I came to be there. It was some time, indeed, before I recollected the events which had occurred, and I then knew that I was indebted for my life to the white hunter I had seen just as the Indians were on the point of capturing me.

I dozed off once more after this, when I was aroused by the cool air coming in owing to the curtain in front of the tent being drawn aside as the hunter entered. After looking at me for a few seconds, and discovering that I was awake; he said in a kind voice, "I am glad to find, my young friend, that you have come to yourself. You'll do well now, I've no doubt, but you have had a tough struggle for life, though by the way you made your escape from the red-skins I had great hopes from the first that you would come off the victor."

"Have I been long here?" I asked. "Pray let me get up; I want to get to Fort Hamilton, to send the doctor to my mother, who is very ill; and if he doesn't go, I am afraid she will die."

"I won't keep you in suspense; the doctor went away the day after you were brought here, and I sent word by him that you were safe. The brave black fellow, who managed to reach the fort, after escaping from the Indians, took the message, but he considered that you were not fit to be moved, and were better off with me than you would be in the crowded fort. To tell you the truth, you've been here six weeks or more, and the chances are that you will remain another six weeks."

"I have much to thank you for," I answered, "the news you have given me will restore my strength faster than anything else, and I should feel still happier if you can tell me that mother benefited by the doctor's visit."

"Of that I can assure you, for I way-laid him, and got him to come and see you. He informed me that she is in a fair way of recovery."

I reiterated my thanks to my host. It was not until he was seated before the fire, cooking some venison steaks from a deer he had just killed, and the flame fell on his countenance, that, examining it, I recognised the white hunter we had met so long before, on our way to Smiling Valley. He had, however, greatly changed since then, and had evidently been leading a wild hunter's life, his dress was of skins, and except his rifle and hunting traps, and cooking utensils, everything in the hut appeared to have been of his own manufacture.

"We have met before," I said, "and I had then to thank you for saving me and my companions from the Indians. Don't you remember me?"

"I recollect the circumstance, though you have altered so much, that I did not recognise you," he answered. He then made inquiries after the Dominie, and expressed his satisfaction at hearing of our success at Smiling Valley. "Indeed, I knew that some white people had settled there from my Indian friend Kluko, who has been for a long time my firm ally, and frequently assisted me to escape from the red-skins. He will be here before long, as he visits me frequently."

I replied that I knew the chief, who had shown his friendly disposition towards us, and should be happy to meet him. I then inquired whether he had been eastward since the time of which we were speaking.

"Once, and for the last time," he answered, a shade of melancholy passing over his countenance.

Though afraid that I might pain him if I put further questions, my curiosity prompted me to inquire what had taken him to the settlements, since he appeared wedded to his wild life.

"Your question arouses the recollection of circumstances I have been endeavouring to forget. I had at one time resolved to abandon my hunter's life and to return to civilisation. I married and settled at Ohio, but misfortune overtook me, floods destroyed my crops, and all the capital I had saved by years of toil was lost. To regain it I resolved once more to plunge into the wilderness, and set off, leaving my wife and infant child with her father. I was as successful as I expected, and having realised a considerable sum from the furs I had obtained, I returned to the settlement, expecting to find my wife and child with her family. On reaching it, bitter was my disappointment to learn that my father-in-law's farm had been destroyed by a fearful fire which raged over the country, and that he, taking my wife and child, had set off with some of his neighbours to migrate westward. A report had been circulated that I had been killed by the Indians, my wife consequently had left no message for me. Once more I turned my face westward, hoping to overtake the train, or to find out where the party had located themselves. In vain I searched for them, but at length had too certain evidence that the train had been cut off by Indians, and every person belonging to it massacred."



"I am afraid in most respects your information was correct," I observed; and I then told him how on our journey we had come up with a train which had been destroyed as had the one he spoke of, "though it might not be the same," I added, "for one person escaped, a little girl, who told us that her name was Lily."

"Lily!" exclaimed the hunter, "that was the name of my child. Did she survive? Where is she?"

I replied that she had lived with us ever since as my parents' adopted daughter. "Indeed my father and mother and Uncle Denis love her as much as they do any one of us," I added.

"Uncle Denis!" repeated the hunter, and he seemed lost in thought.

"Young man," he said at length, "what is your name?"

"Michael Loraine," I answered.

"And your uncle's surname?"

I told him.

"And they are loving and cherishing my Lily?"

"Yes," I replied; "and there is no being an earth I love so well."

For some minutes the hunter was silent, but I saw that he was much agitated. At length he asked, in a low voice, "Have you ever heard your uncle or mother speak of a brother, who came over to America with them?"

"Yes!" I answered, "I was named after him. They both cherish his memory, and I know that Uncle Denis much blames himself for his conduct towards him, and would give all he possesses to see him again."

"Are you speaking the truth?" asked the hunter.

"Indeed I am, why should I do otherwise?" I answered, a suspicion rising in my mind of who he was. "Are you my Uncle Michael?" I asked, looking in his face. "I am nearly certain that you are, and if so, I am confident that my father and mother will rejoice if you will return to them, and Lily too; she must be your daughter."

In spite of my anxiety to get well, the winter snows had melted, and the trees were once more budding before my long-lost uncle and I were able to set forward on our journey. By means of Kluko he had taken care to let my family know of my progress towards recovery, but strange as it may appear, he had not informed them who he was, being anxious to do so, I suspect, personally. Kluko had also taken charge of his bales of skins and peltries; and the wigwam which had so long served as our abode was left for the benefit of any person who might choose to take possession of it.

The hunter, for so I will still call him, was unusually nervous as we approached "Smiling Valley." We were nearly in sight of the farm, when we saw my father approaching. I threw myself from my horse and after our first greetings were over, I introduced the hunter, as he had desired me to do, as the person who had been the means of saving my life.

"Now go forward, Mike," he said, for so he had taken to call me; "your friends at home will be longing to see you. I will follow with your father."

I bounded on, and was soon receiving the joyous welcomings of the loved ones from whom I had been so long parted, while the Dominie almost wrung my hand off, as he congratulated me on my return. Uncle Denis had been absent shooting, but he at that moment came in. I was burning to tell them who the stranger was, but having been forbidden to do so, I restrained myself. In a short time, however, my father and his companion arrived. Uncle Denis gazed at the latter for a few seconds.

"Michael!" he exclaimed, and the two brothers rushed in each other's arms.

Kathleen and Lily were standing by. Uncle Michael turned from his brother, and gazed at Lily: he advanced towards her.

"I am not mistaken!" he said; "come to my arms, my child; I thought you lost with your poor mother, or I should have searched the world over for you. Do not be alarmed, I will not take you from those who have cherished you so lovingly."

Lily returned her new-found father's embrace, but it was some time before she could recover from her astonishment, which was still further increased on finding that he was our Uncle Michael of whom she had so often heard. My father now took him in to see my mother, who was not yet well enough to come

out of doors. Dio quickly made his appearance, and showed his joy at my return by bursting into tears as he exclaimed—

“Dis nigger just ‘bout de happiest man in de ‘ole world.”

I did not fail to inform my father of the coolness and bravery the black had displayed in overcoming his desire to remain with me, and making his way to the fort for the sake of bringing assistance to my mother.

It was not the last time that Dio rendered us essential service, as he ever remained faithfully attached to my father and family.

My two uncles were not only reconciled, but became as affectionate as brothers should be, and before long set off for the settlements, from whence they returned with two suitable wives, who proved admirable helpmates to them, and kind aunts to us.

Lily ere long became my wife, by which time, thanks to my father’s assistance, I had a house and farm of my own.

The Dominie, to our great surprise, soon after the arrival of Uncle Michael took his departure.

“You’ll see me again,” he said, with a knowing smile: and so we did, but he did not come back alone; he was accompanied by a curious specimen of woman-kind, at least so we thought her at first, but she proved of sterling worth, and made the Dominie an excellent wife and became the mother of several sturdy sons and daughters.

Other settlers pitched their tents in the neighbourhood of Smiling Valley, and at length a large and flourishing community was gathered round us, well able to resist any attack which hostile Indians might have made on the settlement. Most of the tribes in the vicinity however, had long before buried the war-hatchet, and we and they dwelt at peace. Years have passed away since the time of which I have been speaking, but Lily and I often talk over the adventures of our younger days, and, as we narrate them to our children, we lift up our hearts in gratitude to Him who preserved us from all dangers and has showered so many blessings on our heads.

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People often ask what is the moral of the tale. As far as my narrative is concerned I did not write it with the idea of evolving

a moral, but I can say that, if it contains one, it is this: “Trust God—do your duty in His sight, and leave all else to Him.”

**The End.**

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